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COMMONWEAL

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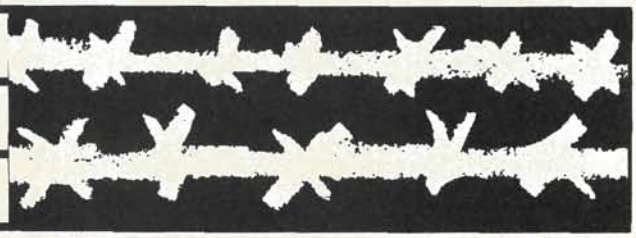
THE CONVENT AT AUSCHWITZ

John T. Pawlikowski

The Editors on Cardinal Glemp



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CORRESPONDENCE

A minority forgotten

Phoenix, Ariz.

To the Editors: The comparison made in Maurice deG. Ford's "Rocking the Roe Boat" [June 2], of the Supreme Court's abortion case, *Webster* v. *Reproductive Health Services*, with its 1954 *Brown* v. *Board of Education* decision is indeed unfortunate, if the author intended to convey the notion that with time people will come to accept abortion as a fundamental right. The so-called "potential life," which even in the first trimester sucks her thumb, is in reality the oft-forgotten party in the abortion debate. This unborn minority desperately needs her day in court.

WILLIAM V. DOLAN, M.D.

Silly statistic cited

Gaithersburg, Md.

To the Editors: The article "Rocking the Roe Boat" [June 2] cited what must be the silliest statistic ever given as to the number of illegal abortion deaths in the United States prior to legalization. According to writer Maurice deG. Ford, a handbill distributed by pro-abortion (not "pro-choice," please) advocates at the Supreme Court claimed that "Before 1973 Back Alley Abortions Claimed as many as 100,000 Women's Lives Each Year."

Since the number of women of reproductive age (15-44) who died yearly from *all* causes was some 50,000 prior to 1973—(see the mortality tables of the yearly official Vital Statistics of the United States compiled by the old Department of Health, Education, and Welfare)—100,000 abortion deaths per year is just a very thick slice of pro-abortion baloney.

JAMES A. MILLER

Applauding an issue

Napa, Calif.

To the Editors: It was a delight to read in the June 16 issue Tim Unsworth's article on Daniel Cantwell ["Fifty Years of Changing Minds & Structures"] and to know that Cantwell is still alive and effective in Chicago. I remember him from a summer I spent at Friendship House in 1946 and he made an indelible impression. He had this beautiful capacity for moving young people beyond the pious abstractions they had been raised with and into a world of meaningful life and action.

It was also pleasing in the same issue to read William Thompson's even-handed review of Matthew Fox's *The Coming of the Cosmic Christ*. As a teacher in the creation spirituality program at Holy Names College in Oakland, I have been impressed over and over with the transforming power of this embodied spirituality. In many ways it provides precisely what many of us have been missing and searching for.

Reading of David Toolan's departure recalls his remarkable book, *Facing West from California's Shores*, the most penetrating study I have ever read of the journey many of us took during the fifties and sixties into and sometimes out of Eastern thought and new age modes of being, but with very little understanding of the larger context we were moving in. He shows us the connections with our own tradition that were easy to lose sight of during those times, and enlightens us as even the most eloquent gurus were unable to do. It is a book that deserves a wide readership.

Finally, it was nostalgic to read John Garvey's account ["Those Weren't the Days"] of his draft-counseling years, so similar to my own. I don't know if I would want to relive those times either, but they provided a fresh wind I would never want to have missed.

BARRY GILL

Piecemeal peacemaking

New York, N.Y.

To the Editors: Mitchell Cohen's analysis of the political situation in Israel and within the Palestinian camp ("A Profusion of Land Mines," May 5) is concise and highly accurate. While many of us endorse his policy guidelines—the route of cautious diplomacy, encouraging mutual moderation and conciliation—there is more opposition to the basic premise of territory for peace than is clear from the article.

Right-wing Israelis repudiate the possibility of territorial compromise, insisting either that all of the land of Israel (including the West Bank) belongs to the Jews by God-given right or that Arab intentions are such that Israel could never relinquish the security of its present borders. The recent election proposal initiated by Prime Minister Shamir, however, demonstrates concrete movement toward conciliation.

The Palestinians, for their part, are none too convincing about their desire to live in peace with Israel. When asked about their goals in the *intifada*, Palestinian youth are apt to spout slogans about the liberation of all of Palestine (i.e., the destruction of Israel). Despite some promising rhetoric from PLO Chairman Yasir Arafat, the PLO has proven that it is factionalized and as yet unable to take the necessary steps to address Israel's security concerns. The Palestinian leadership has declined to renounce officially the "strategy of (liberating Palestine in) stages," wherein a West Bank/Gaza state would serve as a launching pad for attacks on the rest of Israel.

(Continued on page 511)

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COMMONWEAL

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Poland's precipice

September 1, 1939, Hitler invaded Poland. September 1, 1989, Poland's new prime minister, Tadeusz Mazowiecki and his colleagues in Solidarity are negotiating to bring a new government into being. The fifty-year interval has seen the wartime devastation of the Polish people, including the annihilation of virtually its entire Jewish population; the destruction of its cities and pillaging of its countryside; the postwar imposition of a Communist regime; and periodic uprisings that have been answered by unsuccessful efforts at economic reform. None of these events has ever finally crushed the spirit of the Polish people. But neither have they been the occasions for casting off their oppressors. Nor in the midst of these military and political struggles have the Poles been able to rechannel the remarkable energies that have helped them to resist nazism, communism, and sovietization into economic efforts that will feed and sustain a hungry and demoralized population.

The miracle of the present moment—that Solidarity has succeeded against all odds in breaking the Communist party's monopoly over the government—should be celebrated. The Polish genius for political persistence has triumphed.

But the sorry state of the Polish economy will sorely test that achievement. Hecklers at Mr. Mazowiecki's first appearance in Gdansk shouted, "We need bread, not a prime minister." In fact, Poland needs both a new government and a new economic order. The fragile peace of the civic order must be nursed along by Lech Walesa who remains head of Solidarity. Mr. Mazowiecki and the new Polish parliament must work to gain control of the bureaucracy. A cabinet full of non-Communists cannot hope to run a government administration dominated by the Communist *nomenklatura*. The director of Polish television has announced that loyal Communists "would fight for every inch of influence." The economy, which will take years to build, must quickly supply certain basic needs: food and housing. The lack of infrastructure—roads, storage facilities, and distribution systems—stands between Poland's productive agricultural sector and its hungry people. The obstacles are not hard to illustrate: currently Western European countries are trying to send supplies of meat and grains to be sold on the open market, with the proceeds to be invested in distribution networks. But they are being stymied in their efforts by the lack of food storage space in Poland. Polish farmers, who have long since cut back on flocks and herds, have little meat to sell even at the new higher unregulated prices. Until the production and control of fertilizers and farm equipment are loosened from the grip of the bureaucracy, there will be shortages and food lines, and with these a heart-numbing cynicism about the new government. Hard choices lie ahead for the new government, for Solidarity, and for Polish workers. There will be bouts of serious unemployment as Poland adjusts to a freer internal market and tries to find its place in an increasingly specialized international economy. Though the economic tasks are

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daunting and the political balancing act unprecedented, the last decade of Poland's history has taught the skeptical outsider that the impossible isn't.

The U.S., Western Europe, and Japan are responding cautiously to the political shift in Poland. No one is rushing to provide the economy with the financial infusions it desperately needs. That is prudent until the political jousting produces a stable government prepared to make hard economic choices and, more important, implement them. In fact, the new government can perhaps use potential Western help as leverage in the continuing struggle with the bureaucrats and the Communist party. But there will come a moment—perhaps not far off—when debt restructuring, direct aid, and investment will be needed and they must be given generously and quickly.

In the meantime, other practical measures could be devised. American colleges and universities, especially Catholic ones, might develop on-site, crash management courses for the new businesspeople and the new bureaucrats that Poland will need. Certain kinds of technical specialists in food distribution, engineering, and communications could provide hands-on, expert help in building the country's infrastructure.

Do the Western democracies have anything else to offer? The solidarity of the Polish workers, farmers, intellectuals, and the Catholic church in the struggle against the Communists has been remarkable, and there is no gainsaying the democratic spirit that has suffused that struggle. But ultimately the unity dictated by resistance to a common enemy must give way to a diversity of visions—the necessary consequence of political freedom but a possible source of endless squabbles. In the face of oppression many factions were able to achieve cohesion. Now that they are free to compete, the question is whether they can quarrel their way to a working consensus.

A recent experiment, concerned with religious rather than political pluralism, may offer a model. In a program sponsored this summer in Chicago by Cardinal Joseph Bernardin, the Polish bishops, and Spertus College of Judaicia, twenty-two Polish seminary professors were engaged in intense study of Judaism as well as experiencing first-hand American religious pluralism. This may seem far removed from the current crisis in Poland. It is not; for though Poland is a society that has appropriated the riches of its past to create a stirring present, it has a long way to go to meld its traditions with a viable future.

CARDINAL GLEMP

Perhaps the lesson of pluralism needs most to be taught to the Primate of Poland. The complex issues surrounding the debate over the convent at Auschwitz and the ensuing international controversy are discussed in detail by John Pawlikowski, beginning on page 485, and need not be repeated here; but a brief comment is necessary. Cardinal Glemp's unconscionable anti-Semitic remarks at Czestochowa, his lack of compassion for Jewish feelings about the Carmelite convent at Auschwitz, and his want of respect for the four cardinals who signed the accords that at one point peacefully resolved this painful conflict, evoke memories of Poland's sad history. They should alert Catholics, in particular, to the insidious ways in which past sins contaminate the present and future unless they are rooted out and exorcised. Cardinal Glemp, in part, complains that the Jewish objections to the convent at Auschwitz and the agreement to move it are an infringement on Polish sovereignty. The leader of Roman Catholics in Poland will need very quickly to learn the charity and restraint appropriate to church officials in a more democratic Poland. He might begin by apologizing to the Jewish community and to his fellow cardinals, and then quickly proceed to provide the Carmelites with their new convent.

THE BUSINESS OF US ALL

In August 1955, fourteen-year-old Emmett Till journeyed by train from Chicago for his first visit to relatives in Mississippi. It proved to be his last. His mother, Mamie Bradley, had warned the black teen-ager how to behave in the South: "If you have to get down on your knees and bow when a white person goes past, do it willingly." Her young son failed to heed her warnings. Following a mild insult to a young, married white woman, Emmett Till was shot in the head by two white men and thrown into the Tallahatchie River. His murderers were tried but never convicted.

In August 1989, another promising young man, sixteen-year-old Yusuf Hawkins, journeyed by train into a distant land. No matter that Bensonhurst is only at the other end of the subway line from his home in Brooklyn. There, in Bensonhurst, replying to an ad for a used car, Yusuf Hawkins was murdered—in cold blood, after he had begged for mercy—"because," in the words of the *Village Voice*, "he was black and because he had tripped the wire of someone's manhood."

The results in both cases were devastating, not only for Hawkins and Till, their families, and the murderers, but for their neighborhoods and the nation as well. Both murders demonstrated the fierce vitality of what I.F. Stone called the forces of tribalism. In Mississippi, not only had a man been lynched but a white jury refused to convict his murderers. In Bensonhurst, an appalling number of the community responded with fury—not to the murder but to those who marched on the neighborhood to protest it.

Thirty-four years separate these two events—years of advance and regression, of leadership and the lack of it, of compassion and its failures. "Before Emmett Till's murder," wrote Anne Moody in her autobiography, *Coming of Age in Mississippi*, "I had known the fear of hunger, hell, and the Devil. But now there was a new fear known to me—the fear of being killed just because I was black." That same fear is evident in Devin Standard's recent op-ed article in the *New York Times* (September 2). "This is 1989," he writes. "I am twenty-four years old, a graduate of an elite college....Yet I cannot walk

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throughout the city in which I was born without fearing for my safety—just because I am an African-American."

The murder of Emmett Till brought about some remarkable changes. It galvanized blacks in the South and three months later the Montgomery bus boycott was inaugurated. In the North, Till's mother began speaking in city after city. "Two months ago," she told an audience in Cleveland, "I had a nice apartment in Chicago, a good job, a son. When something happened to Negroes in the South I said, 'That's their business, not mine.' Now I know how wrong I was. The murder has shown me that what happens to any of us, anywhere in the world, had better be the business of us all."

Bensonhurst is the business of us all. The bigotry of those whites who reviled the marchers protesting Yusuf Hawkins's murder must be vigorously challenged, just as the agendas of the Al Sharptons and the Louis Farrakhans must not go uncontested. What needs to be emulated now is the resolve of Mamie Bradley, the compassion of Elizabeth Galarza (the Bensonhurst woman who ran to the dying Hawkins and held him in her arms), and the insight of Governor Mario Cuomo who, at the funeral, called Yusuf Hawkins "our child," "the son of the whole city."

ET CETERA

A POOL OPENS James T. Ryan writes: "This is a postscript to my article, 'What Would Our Children Think of Us?' (February 24), describing the efforts to integrate a swimming pool in Lansdowne, Pennsylvania. On May 17, 1989, Federal District Judge Thomas O'Neill ruled that the pool 'has engaged in a widespread pattern or practice of discrimination against blacks from its inception to the present.' He also ruled that the swim club was not private and therefore was in violation of the 1964 Civil Rights Act. On June 20, Judge O'Neill issued a detailed remedial order outlining the steps the club must take, including inviting several specific families, including ours, to join. Pool officials announced they would like to appeal the ruling, but do not have the funds to do so.

"Lansdowne is in no way unique, not a novel relic of the past. Neighboring Yeadon, for example, has two pools: one is predominantly black, although whites have always been accepted; the other is all white. But then, how integrated is your local parish, and when did you last hear a sermon on the topic?"

PUBLICIZING WHAT WORKS Have you heard that farmers are destroying thousands of acres of Peru's rain forests in order to plant fields of coca? The U.S. demand for cocaine, it seems, is helping to deplete the earth's ozone layer and to suffocate the globe.

This story is one of many that can leave people feeling hopeless—resigned, apathetic—about the planet's survival.

Renew America, a nonprofit environmental education organization, has come up with an antidote to the problem of citizen numbness. Its "Searching for Success" campaign seeks to identify, then to reward, successful environmental programs and policies in place in the U.S. The winning programs will serve as models or as catalysts to stimulate new approaches or solutions to specific environmental problems.

Fifty-four members of Congress, twenty-one environmental organizations, and key governors are sponsoring the effort to publish an Environmental Success Index of workable programs in categories such as air pollution reduction, drinking water protection, energy pollution control, food safety, forest management, hazardous materials reduction and recycling, transportation efficiency, and so on—categories that can be used as a reference guide by policymakers, the media, public interest organizations, and citizens.

Applications are being accepted now (Renew America; 1400 16th St. NW; Suite 710; Washington, D.C. 20036); citizens' groups, businesses, universities, and government are eligible. Awards will be presented in Washington, D.C. in April 1990, the twentieth anniversary of the first Earth Day.

AUSCHWITZ CONVENT

A SIGN OF CONTRADICTION

PAIN TO JEWS, SHAME TO CATHOLICS

Little doubt remains that the Auschwitz convent controversy has the potential to destroy nearly a quarter-century of constructive efforts to improve Catholic-Jewish relations, and not only in Poland. Because of the conflict's larger implications, its resolution cannot be left solely to the Polish Catholic church. Nor can it be resolved without a major diffusion of emotions on all sides. This will require courageous steps by both Catholic and Jewish leaders.

The Carmelite convent has existed at the Auschwitz memorial site for some five years. Originally it was founded as a center of prayer for the millions of Jewish and non-Jewish victims who died in this most notorious of concentration camps. Outside of Poland little notice was taken of the sisters' presence at the site until a conservative Belgian Catholic foundation, "Aid to the Church in Distress," began a fundraising effort for the convent in 1986. Materials distributed in connection with this effort contained ambiguous language that could be interpreted (and was by many Jews) to imply that the sisters were praying for the conversion of the Jews. The materials spoke of the "enemies of Christ." Organization spokespersons later maintained that the term referred to those who had demonstrated against the pope in the streets of Holland during the papal visit of 1985. Whatever their original intent, the materials had done damage.

The newly emergent Jewish community of Western Europe picked up this issue as their special cause. Until very recently,

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North American Jews and Israelis played a very secondary role in the controversy. Calls went out from Jewish community leaders in France and Italy, joined by the World Jewish Congress with headquarters in Geneva, for the church to remove the convent from the actual grounds of the concentration camp. Given the history of Catholic anti-Semitism and its undeniable contribution to the success of the Nazi effort, most Jews considered it highly presumptuous for the Carmelites to be praying for Jewish victims at this site; its very name had come to symbolize for Jews the unprecedented evil of the Final Solution. Other factors intruded. Some Jews felt a special resentment toward Poland, where they or their families had experienced pronounced anti-Semitic discrimination in the period between the two world wars. There was a deep suspicion in some Jewish circles that the church was trying to "Christianize" the Holocaust. And disagreement also surfaced regarding the proper way of memorializing the dead. Jews simply do not think it proper to build chapels in graveyards.

The dispute eventually resulted in a series of meetings in Geneva in 1986 and 1987 involving Jewish representatives and, on the Catholic side, Cardinal Franciszek Macharski of Cracow, in whose archdiocese Auschwitz is situated, and Cardinals Jean-Marie Lustiger of Paris, Godfried Danneels of Brussels, and Albert Decourtray of Lyon, cities where the Jewish outcry against the convent was strong. A compromise agreement was reached in February 1987 pledging relocation of the convent to a new site in the town which would become an interreligious center. The document also acknowledged the murder of Poles, Gypsies, and Russian prisoners of war at the camp; and, in a concession to Cardinal Macharski, ended with a sentence declaring that the death camp site is located "on Polish Christian ground." The relocation of the Carmelite convent was to be accomplished within two years.

After the agreement the controversy quieted until early this year, when it was becoming obvious that the target date of Februrary 1989 was not going to be met. No land in the town had actually been designated for the center, something that happened only on June 15. Neither preliminary design plans nor a scheme for financing the project had been proposed. Clearly Cardinal Macharski had run into tremendous difficulties in selling the agreement to the rest of the Polish hierarchy and to the Polish church at large.

At first the words of protest from the Jewish community over the failure to implement the accord were relatively moderate. There was still hope that combined Catholic-Jewish pressure might move the Polish church to fulfill the agreement. But as more time passed with little or no apparent movement, the pressure from the Jewish side intensified. Jewish student groups from Europe, joined by representatives of the U.S.-based "Student Struggle for Soviet Jewry," began demonstrations at the Auschwitz memorial. An international leadership group of Jewish women joined them on one occasion. And some weeks ago Rabbi Avi Weiss, a maverick in the American Jewish community without any solid organizational base, led a small group of demonstrators to the site. Claiming that the sisters had refused to meet with them to listen to their demands, several of the Weiss group mounted the convent fence and made their way into the inner grounds. They were stopped by the Polish police and by water thrown on them by Polish workmen at the convent while bystanders shouted anti-Jewish insults. News stories and photographs of the incident, widely published in the Western press, dramatically raised tensions in both communities.

The Weiss demonstration made the Auschwitz convent a central issue for American Jewry in a way that had not previously been the case. While Weiss's personal standing did not suddenly escalate in mainline Jewish circles, Jews were outraged by the reaction of the Polish workmen and bystanders, which they saw as an attack on Jews as such. With that incident, awareness of the church's failure to fulfill the Geneva agreement became widely known in the Jewish community.

The Weiss demonstration had a marked impact on the Polish scene as well. It was deeply resented by many Catholics, who perceived the rabbi and his group as abusing Polish hospitality, engaging in illegal trespass, and ultimately violating sacred space. This last point is particularly important. Whereas Americans might see the issue purely in terms of property rights, for many Poles the violation was more profound. Responding to this pervasive anger, Cardinal Macharski, without consulting the other Catholic or Jewish signatories to the Geneva agreement, issued a statement August 10 that was widely interpreted as rescinding the Geneva agreement. A careful reading will show that the cardinal did not go quite that far; he said rather that present conditions in Poland brought about by persistent attacks from certain Western Jewish sources made it impossible for him to continue implementation of the agreement. The statement did not seem to rule out resumption of the Geneva plan if the current tensions could be reduced.

The announcement was disturbing to Jews generally, and to Cardinal Decourtray of Lyon as well. After consulting with Cardinals Lustiger and Danneels, he released a statement reaffirming the validity of the 1987 agreement. This was likewise the stance of Vatican spokesmen, who described Cardinal Macharski's statement as a "personal opinion," a term later used in a radio interview by Father Stanislaus Musial, S.J., Cardinal Macharski's secretary for Catholic-Jewish affairs. Father Musial also insisted that implementation of the Geneva accord would resume as soon as the confrontational atmosphere dissipated.

Some progress was being made toward diffusing tension. U.S. Jewish leaders in the dialogue, including Rabbis Marc Tanenbaum and Henry Siegman, and Jewish organizations such as the American Jewish Committee and the Anti-Defamation League spoke out, directly or indirectly, against the Weiss demonstration. In Chicago, center of the U.S. Polish community, a group of Catholic and Jewish scholars involved in an ongoing dialogue prepared a conciliatory statement that was published simultaneously in the *New World*, the archdiocesan newspaper, and *Chicago JUF News*, sponsored by the Jewish United Fund. The National Polish American-Jewish Council also released a call for reconciliation. Both these statements

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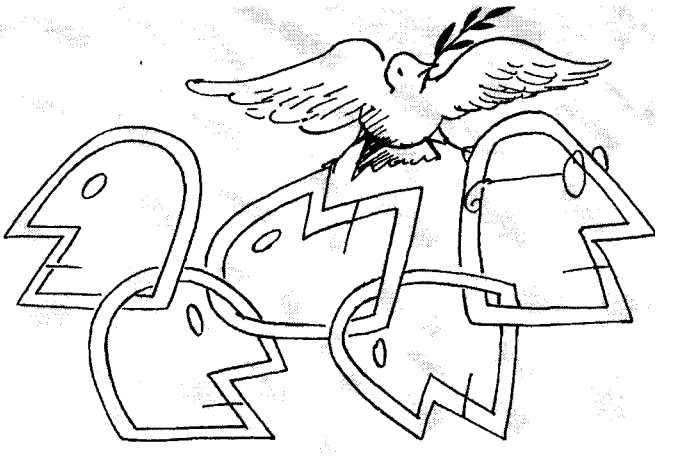
insisted on continued implementation of the Geneva agreement; they also called for better understanding of the significance of Auschwitz for the Polish nation and an end to broad stereotyping of Poles as anti-Semitic.

But then another series of statements from Poland again set back the process of reconciliation. On August 26 the Primate of Poland, Cardinal Joseph Glemp, delivered a major address at the shrine of the Black Madonna in Czestochowa, Poland's most sacred shrine, in which he asserted somewhat bitterly that Jews were endangering hard-won Polish sovereignty through their attacks on the Auschwitz convent. Most objectionable to Jews, but not only to Jews, was the cardinal's language about alleged Jewish power over world media that carried the overtones of classic anti-Semitic stereotypes. Cardinal Glemp's address elicited an exceptionally pointed response from Cardinal O'Connor of New York, who described Glemp's remarks as "distressing" and "harmful." Archbishop Roger Mahony of Los Angeles associated himself with those remarks, while Cardinal Bernard Law of Boston urged the Carmelites themselves to move from the present site. Nobel Laureate Elie Wiesel warned of the anti-Semitic potential in Cardinal Glemp's words. And, in an extremely significant development, a front-page editorial in *Gazeta Wyborcza*, the Solidarity newspaper, criticized the cardinal for making statements that the newspaper said would be a source of great pain for Jews.

Subsequently the cardinal has published an interview in an Italian journal in which he declared the original signatories to the Geneva Accord "incompetent." Three of the signatories, Cardinals Decourtray, Lustiger, and Danneels, have once again defended the agreement; in a statement issued September 3, they ask, "if four cardinals, including the archbishop of Cracow, are not qualified to represent the Catholic side, who might be?"

As I write early in September, the impasse continues. Responsibility for this state of affairs clearly does not rest with one community alone. But Catholics must recognize that the lion's share of the blame must be placed on the two Polish cardinals, Glemp and Macharski. In the first instance, they failed to consult with the international Jewish community before the convent was established to explore ways of properly commemorating both the Jewish and the Polish victims at Auschwitz. At the time of the Geneva agreement they committed a major blunder by failing to discuss its provisions with the Carmelites, thereby stiffening their resistance to a move. And after the Geneva agreement they failed to undertake efforts to convince Polish Catholics of the basic validity of the Jewish claim. Finally, their recent statements were issued much too hastily. There should have been prior communication with the other signatories, as well as careful consideration of the language of the statements. It must also be said that the Vatican made a strategic error in having only a single Polish cardinal sign the accord. Auschwitz is a national issue in Poland, not one confined to the archdiocese of Cracow. This is the one valid point in Cardinal Glemp's Italian interview. This arrangement all too easily triggered a defensive response



in the Polish national psyche, which has been conditioned to resent imposed "foreign" solutions.

On the Jewish side, the pervasive mistake has been a continuing failure to acknowledge clearly, if at all, the special role that Auschwitz holds in recent Polish history. It served as the primary camp for the systematic extermination of the Polish leadership (artists, intellectuals, clergy) in the Nazi campaign to reduce the Polish nation to perpetual servitude. Some Jewish leaders who have spoken on the controversy seem almost totally oblivious to Auschwitz's significance for Poland.

Also contributing to Polish frustration and tensions has been the continuing castigation of Poland in many of the Jewish media as the leading anti-Semitic nation, almost as if Poland and not Germany had run the concentration camps. There has been intense debate in Polish publications in recent years over the record of anti-Semitism, but even those who have been critical of the national response become unnerved at the blanket condemnations that appear all too frequently in Jewish and Israeli publications. The debate over the Auschwitz convent has given life to these unqualified indictments, particularly in newspaper editorials. A comment in the *Jerusalem Post* (July 7, 1989) is typical: "Nor can the recent violent attack by Polish workers on a visiting group of protestors at the site be disconnected from the gruesome historical background of centuries-old Polish anti-Semitism." Such comments simply fail to take account of the solid, scholarly work on Polish-Jewish relations generated by historians connected with the Oxford Institute for Polish-Jewish studies, as well as books such as the late Stefan Korbonski's *The Jews and the Poles in World War II*.

Lastly, there is the failure of the Jewish media to establish any adequate distance from the recent protest tactics of Rabbi Weiss. His trespass on to the convent grounds surely went beyond the bounds of legitimate protest. Yet discussions of the event, as in the *Jerusalem Post* editorial, omit all mention of this dimension of the affair.

Understanding the failures on both sides that launched and then embittered this dispute is, of course, only a first step. The relevant question now is, what must be done to break the deadlock?

First, there is no alternative to the Geneva accord. Moral integrity and the mandate of *Nostra aetate* demand that the

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church abide by this agreement, and it is up to Catholic leaders in all parts of the world to make this point clearly to Cracow. It is up to Cardinal Macharski publicly to affirm the agreement's continuing validity; for his part, Cardinal Glemp must understand that his words have brought pain to Jews and shame to Catholics, so that a conciliatory message from him is an obligation.

Second, a new round of meetings of key Catholic and Jewish leaders to create a second timetable is imperative. The Polish delegation must be somewhat expanded. The "no-talk" attitude of certain European Jewish leaders is self-defeating. The agenda should include the earliest possible implementation of confidence-building measures; they might include immediate removal of the controversial twenty-three foot cross on the present convent as well as steps to move the Carmelites to an intermediate site until the design for the interreligious center can be completed and financing secured. The agenda might also involve a joint Jewish-Catholic appeal to the Auschwitz Museum authorities to improve the presentation of exhibits at the site to emphasize the uniquely evil character of the Nazis' genocidal program. Not only at Auschwitz but throughout Poland (and elsewhere as well) the Catholic community must commit itself to understanding the special meaning of Auschwitz for Jews and to comprehend Jewish attitudes toward appropriate ways of memorializing the dead. This commitment should be matched by Jewish efforts to educate their community about the significance that Auschwitz has for Poland.

In the end, there is no way out of the present impasse without a resumption of face-to-face dialogue seeking restoration of mutual trust. The conflict is the more painful because it is unnecessary, contrary to the best instincts on both sides, contrary to the true lessons of Auschwitz. A failure of reconciliation in this dispute would be a victory for no one but the ghost of Hitler.

JOHN T. PAWLIKOWSKI

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RACE RELATIONS

DOING THE RIGHT THING(S)

BEYOND ENTITLEMENTS

For over two decades, we have slowly been retreating from the consensus that brought about the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Act of 1965. Now, however, an even more divisive change is taking place. We have reached a point in post-consensus America where racism has acquired a status it hasn't had within most of our lifetimes. The new racism is based on a sense of entitlement, and unlike the crude violence of events in Bensonhurst, Howard Beach, or Forsyth County, it has respectable defenders.

Last June in a *Harper's* magazine article entitled, "I'm Black, You're White, Who's Innocent?" essayist Shelby Steele described the psychology of this new racism in terms of the feelings of guilt and innocence that fuel it. "To be entitled one must first believe in one's innocence, at least in the area where one wishes to be entitled," Steele wrote, and then went on to observe that in contemporary America, "Both races instinctively understand that to lose innocence is to lose power (in relation to each other). Now to be innocent, someone else must be guilty, a natural law that leads the races to forge their innocence on each other's backs." What is happening at present is that this psychology of racism has evolved into an ethic of victimization in which both blacks and whites say to each other, "The wrong done to me is so great that anything I owe you is cancelled out. Your needs, your history no longer count."

The white version of this ethic of victimization may be seen in its most sophisticated and dangerous form in Justice Sandra Day O'Connor's majority opinion in the Supreme Court's *Richmond* v. *Croson* case of last January. The case, which was the forerunner of a series of Supreme Court retreats on affirmative action, arose when the city of Richmond, Virginia, acting on a 1983 study showing that over the previous five years less than 1 percent of its construction contracts had gone to minority-owned businesses, instituted a set-aside program that reserved 30 percent of its public works funds for minority-owned construction firms. Speaking for a 6-3 Court, Justice O'Connor struck down the Richmond plan on the grounds that it denied whites the right to compete for a fixed percentage of city contracts solely because of their race. She then went on to argue that such remedies were inherently dangerous. "Classifications based on race," she observed, "may in fact promote notions of racial inferiority and lead to a politics of racial hostility."

What about the rights and feelings of minority contractors in a city that is 50 percent black and was once the capital of the Confederacy? Justice O'Connor did not deny that "the sorry history of both public and private discrimination in this country has contributed to a lack of opportunities for black entrepreneurs." But that history, plus Richmond's record, were still not enough, she argued, to require remedial set-asides. Only the victimization of one party (white construction firms currently competing for Richmond's business), she and the Court concluded, was compelling. Seeing that both sides had merit did not require a solution that treated them with equal care.

The black version of this ethic of one-way victimization is most visible today in Spike Lee's new film, *Do the Right Thing*, in the role Lee himself plays as Mookie, the delivery man for Sal's Famous Pizzeria. The turning point of the film, set in Bedford-Stuyvesant on the hottest day of the summer, occurs when two neighborhood blacks get into an argument with Sal over the absence of blacks in the pictures he has on his "Wall of Fame." A fight breaks out, and when the police arrive, they end up killing one of the men who had been fighting with Sal. After the police leave, Mookie, who up to now has easily moved between the pizzeria and the neighborhood, throws a garbage

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can through Sal's window, and a full-scale riot breaks out. The neighborhood, which just a few hours earlier couldn't even be persuaded to carry out a boycott of Sal's, is suddenly united. For old and young, the riot is a moment of deliverance, and they stop their destruction of a nearby Korean grocery store, which they have resented, only when its terrified owner shouts, "Me no white. Me black."

What about Sal, who has worked in the neighborhood for twenty-five years and cares about the people in it? As with the blacks of *Richmond* v. *Croson*, his history is not ignored. Rather it is treated by Mookie as a history that in the end doesn't merit defending. After the riot begins, Mookie sits watching it from the curb, and the next morning he still shows no remorse, no concern over Sal's being made a scapegoat for the police. Instead, he goes to Sal and demands his week's salary of $250. He won't discuss the meaning of the night before with Sal, and when Sal, in a moment of both anger and affection, throws five $100 bills at him, Mookie hesitates only briefly before picking up all the money. In his mind he must be paid and repaid, while Sal, despite the loss of his pizzeria, can never pay enough. As Lee has written in a companion volume to his film, "The changes happen in Sal instead of Mookie because I feel black people cannot be held responsible for racism. We are not in that position. We are, and have been, the victims."

How do we escape the racial impasse that such thinking must inevitably produce? It's not clear that we can. But we can take hope from the effort being made. In New York Cardinal John O'Connor goes out of his way to visit both the white victim of the Central Park "wilding" and a black Brooklyn woman, whose rooftop rape a week earlier drew scant media attention.

In Washington, D.C., Georgia Congressman John Lewis, the former chairperson of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), observes, "We made a mistake when the movement turned against its first principle: integration. The seeds that were planted twenty years ago have borne a very bitter fruit."

The challenge for the 1990s will be building on such visions of the future, making sure they are not swallowed up by the tolerance for intolerance that an ethic of one-way victimization promotes.

NICOLAUS MILLS

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OF SEVERAL MINDS John Garvey

DON'T WORRY, BE STILL

THE VIRTUE OF NONCHALANCE

An Orthodox bishop once told me that he receives people into the church only after they have been made part of an Orthodox family's life for a year, allowed by the family to worship and share meals and time with them freely. This is so that the person interested in entering the church can observe Orthodoxy as it is lived on a daily basis. "But," he said, "I always make sure that the family has been Orthodox for at least five years."

I asked what the reason was for that limitation, and he answered, "So that they will have lost all their convert's enthusiasm."

A Trappist monastery I once visited has a program which allows some guests to participate in the lives of the monks to a greater than usual degree, sharing their work and common worship. Participants must stay for at least five days, however. The monk in charge told someone who asked why a guest couldn't stay a shorter length of time and still participate, "They need to have enough time to begin to be bored. Without that, you won't begin to understand monasticism."

I'm not sure five days is enough time to get bored with monastic life, but the principle is a sound one. Both of these ideas—waiting for "convert enthusiasm" to die off, and seeing what's there after boredom—may offer a way into understanding what the earliest monastic writers meant when they spoke of "the fires of *apatheia*."

Our word "apathy" doesn't begin to convey the right sense of the word. A literal translation—away, or apart, from feeling or emotion—sounds a bit chilly, and so does a possible substitute, "detachment." Perhaps the difficulty with a simple definition lies in the fact that the experience is distant from ordinary consciousness, which many commentators (not all of them gnostics) have compared to drunkenness or dreaming. Any attempt to be still can show how the mind jumps from instant to instant, scattering in every direction but the moment you actually occupy. Memories of the past and worries or fantasies about the future pull the attention away from the present. Simply to be, in the presence of God and others, is not simple at all. Stillness is sometimes a gift, but it is also in part a learned thing.

Which brings us back to the examples at the start of this. What is wrong with a convert's enthusiasm, or with finding the particulars of the monastic life intriguing? Nothing, of course; nor is there anything wrong with enjoying a piece of music you haven't heard before. But even this good thing is, in some important circumstances, a distraction. The idea of *apatheia* calls on us to question the ordinary place of the emotions in our life.

Our culture teaches us to identify our emotional life with the deepest parts of the self. We are taught to rely on feeling and emotion as guides, and the jargon of pop psychology reflects this: one should "be

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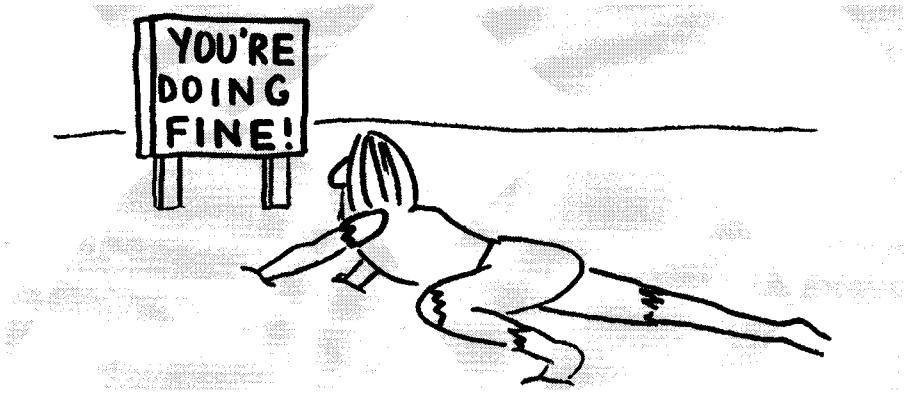

in touch with" one's feelings, and not repress them. This isn't without its wisdom. To deny anger, for example—to refuse to acknowledge its presence in us or the way in which it can determine our behavior—can lead to the worst forms of self-righteousness and self-deception. And to see nothing good in our feelings, to regard them as essentially unimportant or indifferent, is not Christian. Insofar as they have to do with our humanity they are good.

They are not, however, guides—not, anyway, as we usually experience them. They can be understood properly only with a certain struggle, an effort at attentiveness which does not come easily to us. I was about to write, "does not come naturally to us"—but one point here is that our true nature is obscured, and must be won. This may be one reading of Jesus' words, "The kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent bear it away."

There are instructive parallels in other religious traditions, in (for example) the philosophy of the stoics and in Buddhism. Rather than define *apatheia* abstractly, it is probably a good idea to look at specific situations, to see what can be negative and limiting about our ordinary approach to feeling, and what is positive about the movement toward *apatheia*.

If someone insults me at an obvious level (say, by calling me ugly or stupid) or at a less obvious level (by telling me that something I have written is shallow, or by laughing at one of my firmly held opinions), my first reaction is to take offense, to feel anger or at least irritation, and to respond in a way which is a direct and emotional reaction, however well-disguised it might be in many instances, to the feeling of having been insulted or humiliated. Perhaps one of the reasons *apatheia* began to impress me as an idea which is of genuine practical help was that a number of incidents in my life made it uncomfortably clear to me that my need to be right had little or nothing to do with any love for the truth. That need had to do, instead, with the shoring up of ego; it could pose easily as a concern for truth.

But if truth were really at stake, my response would never involve anger or irritation or triumph (a feeling which is, I am fairly sure, a variety of anger). For instance, if I am in fact ugly, that is the case. No reason to be upset about it. If I am not, the person who has claimed that I am has done so to wound me, in which case I should wonder first how I may have caused such offense as to provoke that response, or I should feel compassion for someone who has some other need to wound; in either case, anger isn't the appropriate response.

Similarly, if something I have written is shallow or stupid, it is; if not, it isn't—but why be angry when this is pointed out? What gets hurt and makes anger arise is the challenge to an image of myself, an image which is never ugly, shallow, or stupid. The need to hold on to that image is the most common form of idolatry, and many of our feelings are tied up in the effort. The image does not need to be obviously foolish; it can also be the image of the self as a humble, responsive and loving person, or a prayerful person, or even a person who is open to correction.

Some Orthodox writers speak of "guarding the heart." This means attentiveness to what goes in and out of our hearts emotionally, and an alertness to the ways we are accustomed to respond. There are spiritual directors who ask those who come to them to confess everything about the way they live—not only those things which most obviously involve spirituality, but also matters of daily habit and routine, so that the ordinary movements of attentiveness or inattentiveness can be seen more clearly. This has something in common with the Buddhist practice of observing such common and non-moral reactions as revulsion and fear. A Buddhist manual for monks describes revulsion as a kind of anger directed inappropriately toward an object that cannot harm you (for example, a decaying corpse).

Where the idea has gone wrong is not in being applied too strictly, but rather too selectively. There is in some of the stoics and some Christian ascetics too exclusive and negative a concentration on sexual temptation or drunkenness or gluttony—obvious passions, all having to do with the body—and this apparent denial of the goodness of the body has led some people to a rejection of the whole ascetic ideal. That's unfortunate, because finally it is an affirmative, rather than a negative, approach to life. The body and our feelings assume the places they are meant to have before we distort them.

There are a number of prayers in Orthodox prayerbooks which speak of our passions as deluding influences which make us unhappy. If we react to this language by assuming that the passions in question are the ones preachers have always taken aim at—lust is probably the first choice there—they can look merely quirky and old-fashioned. But the passions in question, when they are identified, are often such emotions as sadness, or our obsession with bitter memories. One prayer to Mary asks for the dispelling of "the dream of despondency," and another asks for "deliverance from my many cruel memories and deeds."

The goal of *apatheia* is stillness. Perhaps the best image of what it means is the one offered in the Gospel, the image of Jesus with his disciples in the storm-tossed boat. They panicked and were afraid—they were at the time very attached to their feelings, driven by them. They were affronted by the fact that he lay at rest, his head on a pillow. It may not be too much to suggest that *apatheia* is, finally, a kind of divine nonchalance. □

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A SILENCE THAT IS NOT HOLLOW

THE MINDFULNESS OF SHUSAKU ENDO

ELIZABETH BEVERLY

There was a time when one of our daughters loved a book that scared her. She was only four, and the book was wonderful. But it scared her. Maurice Sendak's *Where the Wild Things Are*. She wasn't frightened when we read the book in the small West African village where we were then living and working, but when she and I traveled back to the states to visit my mother for a month, a ritual began. At bedtime Miranda would ask for *Wild Things*, I would read it, and later she would wake in fear.

One night, feeling that the pattern we had entered was unnecessary, I told her that I had already chosen another story. I'd bought a new book; wasn't that great? What followed was worse than her predictable nightmares. She raged and begged for the Sendak, hugged her pillow, sobbed out a frenzy of grief. I don't remember how I calmed her, but after a time she slept.

What I do remember is my mother waiting in the darkened hallway to take me by the hand and remind me of something. When your parents, whom you love and who, for all you know, run the world, put all your toys in storage, and pack you off to a life where even the language is unknown, you may go happily. But simply because you trust them to make good choices, it doesn't necessarily follow that *you* want to make no choices at all. One way in which *Wild Things* was vital to Miranda was that, in a life that seemed to be determined by the whim of others, she had chosen this bedtime book herself, and the life that surrounded this choice felt like hers. Even the nightmares and the calling for me in the night. "Let her choose something," my mother told me, "even if she chooses wrong."

Shusaku Endo is Japanese, a Catholic. As far as he knows, he has chosen neither of these identities. Being Japanese in Japan is a fact of birth. Being a Catholic began as an intention of his mother, who had her son baptized in 1934 when he was eleven. Then followed a disturbing struggle with his faith during his college work in Tokyo, studies of French literature in Lyons, return to his native Japan, and three long years in the hospital. Throughout this time, Endo was wondering what made him Catholic. As he attests, "There were many times when I felt I wanted to get rid of my Catholicism, but I was finally unable to do so. It is not just that I did not throw it off, but that I was unable to throw it off. The reason for this must be that it had become a part of me after all."

Choices. Being Japanese and being Catholic are not choices for Endo; neither is his frail health. These identities have claimed him, shaped his life, created his sense of self. But this doesn't mean that Endo has made no choices at all. He has chosen to be a fiction writer and, as such, within the field of language and vision in his eight novels and one collection of stories, he has been free to play out choice after choice, to create the world again and again. Some of us, given a life that seems arbitrary, might find art appealing precisely because it can let us escape our helpless state and have some fun. Some of us might write because we believe that our suffering has privileged us and through such privilege we can model better ways of being.

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Behind each of these impulses lies the desire to control something about the human lot. At times, we may believe that such desire is what calls art into being.

But Endo's desire lies elsewhere. It matters that he is Japanese; it matters that he is Catholic. Most of all it matters that his embrace of these two identities puzzles and hurts him, sends him right into a still place, full of yearning and gentle suffering, from which he writes. If the harsh counterclaims of Japanese culture and Catholic tradition have made life seem perilous, then the labor of fiction has made it seem bearable. Fiction that lies outside the narrative realm of simple cause and effect always promises that unreconcilable elements may be held side by side on the same page where they find a home together in words. Endo wants nothing less than to draw upon his chosen work in order to embody the mystery of the unchosen life.

It's important to remember that Endo is writing for a Japanese audience. We are his accidental, Occidental readers and, as such, run the risk of misunderstanding the way in which his narratives function. If it is hard for us to understand how a writer can embody mystery without employing techniques of magical realism or surrealism, English translations of Endo's work can give us hints. Near the end of his delicate but sinewy nonfiction account of Christ's life, *A Life of Jesus* (1973), Endo addresses his Japanese readers: "That's the whole life of Jesus. It stands out clean and simple like a single Chinese ideograph brushed on a blank sheet of paper. It was so clean and simple that no one could make sense of it, and no one could produce its like."

The image of ideograph as ideal story may be hard for us to understand. We are used to reading with speed along smooth lines of print; black brushstrokes on a white sheet stop the eye. The meaning of the ideograph lies not in its motion, but in the relation of black to white, of field to ground. The meaning within the black strokes can emerge only because the white space contains it. It's not common for most American readers to notice the paper as well as the print, but such notice yields rich rewards. An aesthetic experience may be one reward, but that's not the point. It's not what language looks like that matters, but how it makes us think. If literacy suggests that we respond to black and white together, we can see that all perception is, at least, twofold. Implicit in our knowledge of speech is the silence that cradles the sounds. Implicit in the motion of the dance is the stillness between the steps of the dance. Implicit in the lover's absence is his or her presence. Within the experience of health lies illness.

Nothing is known by itself; all experience is relational.

The compact form of the ideograph is amplified in haiku. Elementary school may teach many of us that this form of Japanese poetry is easy to write, if only we can count, but the finest haiku essentially concerns that which cannot be written. Here's eighteenth-century Buson:

Coolness:
the sound of the bell
as it leaves the bell.

We don't have to be Japanese to be lifted by the feel of bell-sound even as it wells forth, but it's no secret that most of *our* familiar literatures don't engage in this simultaneous play of sound/sight/emotion/pace. This haiku stops us in time, in midfeeling. Although we know that such attentive reading requires our senses, we may not want to know that it requires more than what we usually give when we read, even in the case of poetry. It calls on the spirit. The sound and glow of the lines resonate with this spirit. Buson's spirit. My spirit. Yours. We're all packed in there together. There's no skimming this kind of verse; we either get it, because we choose to allow it within us, or we don't get it and call it really simple.

Endo may not write haiku, but this is precisely the kind of attention his work requires if we are to probe the mystery within it. Taken singly, and at breakneck American pace, Endo's novels easily resemble other kinds of work: historical novels, philosophical ruminations on the banality of evil or the crisis in cross-cultural relations, fictional exposés of the sexual underworld in contemporary Japan or of corruption in the hospital or the government, the story of midlife suffering, an inquiry into the torments of faith, etc. Read as a pile of "stories," Endo's fiction seems to cover a wide range of topics. But if we insist on such reading, we miss the heart of Endo's moral universe, his instruction through illumination.

Ultimately, all of Endo's novels are about the same predicament: being misunderstood or mis-"taken." Living in a perilous world in which people cannot or will not resonate with one another, or with the life around them. *Silence* (1969), the most widely read of his novels in English translation, quite deftly explores this predicament in a setting charged with religious tension. Set in seventeenth-century Japan, the novel brings to life a period of religious persecution when to be Catholic was knowingly to embrace martyrdom or to apostatize

Shusaku Endo's books:

The Sea and Poison *(Michael Gallagher, trans.), Taplinger, 1980 (1958).*
Volcano *(Richard A. Schuchert, trans.), Taplinger, 1980 (1959).*
Wonderful Fool *(Francis Mathy, trans.), Harper & Row, 1983 (1960).*
Silence *(William Johnston, trans.), Charles E. Tuttle, 1972 (1969).*
A Life of Jesus *(Richard A Schuchert, trans.), Paulist Press, 1978 (1973).*
When I Whistle *(Van C. Gessel, trans.), Taplinger, 1980 (1974).*
The Samurai *(Van C. Gessel, trans.), Aventura/Vintage Books, 1984 (1980).*
Stained Glass Elegies, *a collection of short stories (Van C. Gessel, trans.), Dodd, Mead, 1985 (1984).*
Scandal *(Van C. Gessel, trans.), Dodd, Mead, 1988.*

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by trampling on the *fumie*, an embossed image of Christ's face. Between 1614-1640 it is estimated that between five and six thousand believers were martyred.

Endo has chosen to follow a fictionalized Portuguese missionary, Sebastion Rodrigues, through the test of faith that leads to his eventual apostasy. The account of Rodrigues's ordeal is stunning in its vividness (Endo employs the device of reproducing his character's letters to his superiors), but relatively simple in its premise; the main question that the novel seems to pose is whether or not Rodrigues will deny his God. As harsh circumstances mount and the priest's weaknesses are revealed, we suspect that Rodrigues will apostatize, just as his former teacher, Christovao Ferreira, had done before him. The suspense in the plot derives not so much from our interest in Rodrigues's eventual action, but in the nature of God's silence. It seems that the priest wants to use this silence against God; if God won't speak to him, then Rodrigues won't speak on his behalf. When Christ finally speaks, as Rodrigues raises his foot over the *fumie*, he urges the priest to trample upon him. When silence is broken in this manner, the priest's apostasy seems like a shocking betrayal.

But stop. If what you just read sounds like the real story of *Silence*, let me remind you of the premise from which this "real story" unfolds. I said that it seems that the main question is whether or not Rodrigues will deny his God. There's no doubt that this may be the main question that arises in the reader's mind, for the Western reader is lodged in a world of curiosity over human motivation, a world in which actions stand for something, a world in which plots unfold.

But I'm not convinced that this is the question that Endo is asking himself and his characters as he writes them into life. I think Endo is asking something much simpler: does apostasy really mean the denial of God? The church certainly believes so, as well as the Japanese government. They're satisfied. But what about Rodrigues? And what about God?

Isn't it possible that built into the very act of apostasy is an error of human logic, both emotional and rational? The act of trampling Jesus' face, taking one's foot and stepping on Christ's face, calls Christ's presence into being. To deny Jesus would be to be unable to see him at all. Trampling a presence does not deny the presence. And if the presence is a voice who reminds you that he lived just so that you could, at this very moment, be as weak and cowardly as you are being, then the act of apostasy is one not merely of affirmation, but of faith. God exists; he knows you and lives for you.

In the slim final chapter, following this apostasy, Rodrigues the ex-priest functions as a real priest, offering the sacrament of absolution to Kichijiro, the man who surrendered Rodrigues to the authorities. Finally the priest understands love; there is no betrayal in a world of love. Pain may flourish, but life is possible because people are at least trying to be good to each other. This is lonely knowledge for Rodrigues, even for Endo. Because to everyone else, apostasy means betrayal. It means sin.

If apostasy is not a sin, then what is? Rodrigues, within his cell, listening to the guards chatting outside, for a moment understood a deep meaning of sin. He reflects: "[T]hese guards, too, were men; they were indifferent to the fate of others. This was the feeling that their laughing and talking stirred up in his heart. Sin...is not what it is usually thought to be; it is not to steal and tell lies. Sin is for one man to walk brutally over the life of another and to be quite oblivious of the wounds he has left behind."

To be oblivious. To be mindless. For Endo, this is sin. Evil exists; it is produced by humans. But it happens only because people stop thinking. Distracted by pride, or even by humility, they forget. And such forgetfulness is the source of all human sorrow. Mindlessness creates the atmosphere in which evil thrives.

All of Endo's work brims with the sorrow of this knowledge. Mindlessness plagues us all as individuals, but our collaboration in a forgetful state produces evil that even society detests. In Endo's early novel *The Sea and Poison* (1958), a startling collection of first-person narratives describing the life surrounding the vivisection of American POWs in World War II Japan, we understand how easily the unthinking individual helps to create the murderous institution. In *Scandal* (1988), Endo's most recent novel, the nature of sexual evil in contemporary Japan is explored. Once again the inquiry begins not with the problem of pleasure, but with the problem of selfishness. To forget the meaning of another's life, another's body, is to sin against that life, that body, and against us all.

If sin derives from mindlessness, then no one is immune. Acts of murder and sexual damage are clearly antisocial, but what happens when a whole community chooses to stop thinking? What happens when the Catholic church believes its doctrine on

Elizabeth Beverly's critical essay on Shusaku Endo is another in our series of articles on contemporary Catholic writers of fiction. We have asked our essayists to give an overview of the author's works, showing our readers where and how this writer locates the central human drama, the big questions, the religious crisis of our time. What does the Catholic sensibility of a Shusaku Endo have to tell us about our common world, about the state of our souls? Previous articles in the series include Rosemary Booth on Mary Gordon (August 12, 1988), John B. Breslin on Andre Dubus (December 2, 1988), Robert E. Hosmer on Muriel Spark (April 21, 1989), Daniel Murtaugh on William Kennedy (May 19, 1989), and Paul Baumann on Thomas Keneally (July 14, 1989).

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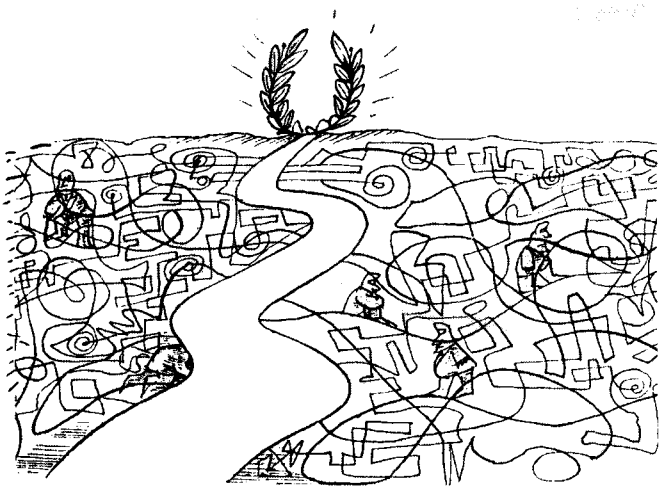

apostasy, and forgets the life of the single Christian locked within the moment of being seen by God? What happens when the hospital chooses to forget that the lives of the elderly are real lives, and decides that this population is ideal for certain types of casual care? What happens when a city government chooses to believe the study that assures them that the volcano hovering over the planned convention hotel will not erupt, even though another study suggests it will?

What happens? What happens? We all know what happens. The mystery that startles Endo is that with this knowledge, we keep forgetting to do something. We keep being surprised by our capacity to be disappointed. It is not God's silence we need to fear, but our own silence. If this is the darkness in the soul of Endo's fiction, then where is the light?

Our chances of being blinded are slight, because the light that sparks the world of Endo's fiction emanates from the characters: some glimmer faintly, some erupt in bursts of momentary clarity, some just flicker and die. No great shafts of light from heaven illuminate this world; it is human terrain. What distinguishes Endo's "heroes" from his other characters is their ability to remember, even occasionally, what they are doing, what they have done. Take Kichijiro, the man who betrays Rodrigues. He is not sufficiently mindful to avoid sin, but at least he achieves moments in which he knows and claims the magnitude of his sin.

Suguro, the protagonist of *Scandal* (1988), provides us with another model of hope. He's one of those characters whose biography so closely resembles his author's that the novel bristles with an extra-textual intrigue. But Suguro doesn't have any idea what he has done in the past; all he knows is what he must do in the future in order to redeem his own mindlessness.

Then there's Flatfish from *When I Whistle* (1974). Flatfish is ridiculous in the eyes of his fellow classmates, but he alone understands the meaning of devotion. He may seem foolish in his longing for the unattainable dream girl, but he never forgets who she is. Such characters pace the pages of all the stories, all the novels. Almost always they are unappreciated and misunderstood. Often they are pathetic, unattractive, even repulsive.

If these are the models of redemption offered to us by Endo, how can we take heart? How can we be drawn to such unattractive characters? How can we trust them to show us the right way to live? We can't; that's not what Endo offers us. His fiction does not exist to attract us, to invite us; his fiction exists in order to bear witness, to permit us to see the way it is with us. Here. Now. Everywhere. Catholic or not. Japanese or not. This is the way it is.

For Endo, Jesus alone can show us how to live. Endo's belief in Jesus, both man and God, is the essential truth of his Catholicism. It's not the church that sustains him with its Western dogmas and sacraments. But Christ, the one who was and is forever mindful. When Endo brings this Jesus to life in his remarkable *A Life of Jesus*, we hear a warmth and excitement that is simply not present in the fiction. Warmed by the glow of Jesus' love, Endo can liken Christ to the ever-mindful mother, the loving woman. He can understand the miracle of Jesus' companionship, can imagine what it might feel like to touch the hem of his garment. He can construct the lives of the disciples as they danced around Jesus and longed for him to be someone else, someone not quite so disappointingly unworldly.

More than that, Endo is not afraid to imagine what it must have felt like to *be* Jesus, the man, alone, misunderstood, always disappointing the crowd. Endo knows, as Jesus did, that "a person begins to be a follower of Jesus only by accepting the risk of becoming himself one of the powerless people in this visible world." How did Christ feel about this? Was all-embracing love not sufficient to change the world? Endo's Christ, the embodiment of mindfulness, knows that love is meaningless if it is simply indiscriminate. He can pass through a crowd and feel the touch of a single woman who needs his care. What Jesus really offers is the gift of being known, and being loved anyway.

Endo's Jesus loves the people who betray him partly because they are free to betray him. Love does not control; love accepts. And in a world in which choice seems to be limited by the conditions of birth or health, the knowledge that God always offers one the choice to think and to act is a serious charge. Endo offers us a Christ who doesn't simply tolerate human choice, but loves it. A Christ who calls out, "Trample me!" A Christ who might sound like my own mother when she says,"Let her choose something, even if she chooses wrong."

I think of little Miranda in her dark American nights, torn between cultures, calling out for a story that is all about being torn between cultures. The story made her cry, and she wanted to cry. How deeply we need to choose , again and again, the story that tells us exactly what we already know.

I think of Shusaku Endo, not a child, but a man of such mindfulness, such gracious poise, telling the same story about the world time after time. We, his audience, can find his work more or less accessible, more or less successful, more or less well-executed. But finally this hardly matters.

Endo has taken Jesus quite seriously; he has decided to write from the world of the sorrowful, the weak, the cowardly. As Endo spins their lives onto the page, he doesn't glorify them or heal them; he is their companion. He can do this because the act of writing so perfectly resembles the act of prayer. All that is needed is faith and the knowledge that a single voice counts, and an essential unwavering listener waits. □

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STANDING IN THE WAY OF WORSHIP

RESPONSES TO PAUL E. DINTER

In response to Paul E. Dinter's observations on eucharistic liturgies in Western Europe (June 16, 1989), three readers from the West, Midwest, and East Coast respond with comments on their areas of the U.S. THE EDITORS

The Work of Our Hands

From my kitchen table I look east over a parched valley. A broad green streak through the brown is tomato fields. The valley is flanked by new houses—a sea of rooftops—and deep brown scars ripped into the chaparral indicate where more houses are yet to come. The freeway cutting north to south roars with cars and trucks; they accelerate as they make the effort to climb out of the valley. On a hill to the left is my geographic parish. It has a pastor from Ireland. He knows no Spanish. I say geographic. My family doesn't go there any more.

Standing by that parish church, you could look into another valley. A Latino community lives there. Even though they can lift their eyes and see the parish church, they have their own church, a Catholic mission fashioned from a warehouse. A priest from Spain serves them. His English is hard to understand. At the back of this mission, around a plaster St. Francis, there are clustered a collection of animal figurines. A large plaster rabbit grazes on the astro-turf lawn next to a pair of thumb-sized skunks. The cow and the bear eat hay together.

Directly ahead of me, beyond the tomato fields, beyond the polo fields, which I know to be green when I can see them on days when the skies are not smudged, beyond the golf courses that follow, lies a new parish. On a good day, with my glasses on, I can see it. It is being built to accommodate the arrival of an instant and affluent population. Each house in that community is on an acre parcel. Each house, one a Spanish hacienda, one a French chateau, the next a Tudor mansion, or a grey stone castle complete with towers and turrets, stands cheek-by-jowl with the others. They are crowded because an acre does not allow them much margin—these mega-homes. They plant full-grown trees between them in an attempt to provide some buffer: giant cactus for the hacienda, plane trees for the French chateau.

The new church is smooth and elegant like an ice palace. It is the best we have. It has a famous architect. It has a high wall all around the complex with a place to gather in the center. When the church is finished, the people will leave their large homes, come into the churchyard, and gather around a magnificent, splashing fountain. This is not the baptismal font, however. The font inside the church is much smaller. No immersion here. Immersion is messy. RCIA, in fact, is a large, unchewed lump that lies in the throat and won't be swallowed down nor spat up here. The pews are arranged in a shallow "U" so that parishioners won't be distracting each other during the homily. And this protective outer wall—it embraces the people and leads them into the church. But there is no hostile, pluralistic bustle to screen out, only the mansions which peer down anyhow from their perches into the church court. Nothing to wall out, unless it is the migrant workers who tend the mansions, the golf courses, the polo fields, the tomato fields, and who hide out in shacks made of cardboard and plastic sheeting in what dry brush is left standing. The maids in the mansions are Filipino, Mexican, Central American. They have no cars. They cannot walk to the church, much less to the mission. The men in the bushes can't wash up here. They can't come into the church court. They wouldn't be comfortable here. Indeed not.

Other newly built churches in the urban sprawl are as architecturally inspired as a Safeway market or a Ramada ballroom. Brown swirling carpets, brown walls, brown pews, brown banners with felt hearts, the Beach Boys, the Eucharist, a transparent flake of brittle plastic...spare us, O Lord.

Deep in the city, there is a black church that rocks with feeling and faith. They are not afraid to rend the heavens to mourn the loss of their young men to guns and drugs. Their music is real, their worship authentic.

At the Navy base of a Sunday, eleven hundred young men and women wedge themselves into a hall to find that the news is good, to find the only caring, the only hope, the only grace, the only dignity they may have experienced in a week of barked orders and military rites.

Some of us have tried to "bloom where we were planted"—tried to make the church work for us, indeed to be church. Year after year. Pastor after pastor. Soon after I arrived here I had a dream: I am processing down the aisle to receive the Eucharist. My hands are cradled and ready. As I approach my pastor, I discover to my horror that he is not distributing hosts—but rather each person receives a yellow "happy button." I try to usher my children out of the line. I try to pass the word gently to those around me. This is a fraud. No Eucharist here. Lack of faith.

Finally we take the children where so many—young people,

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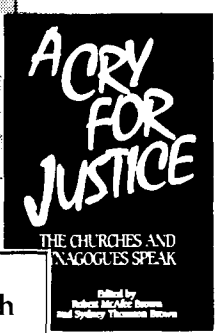

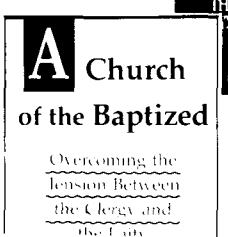

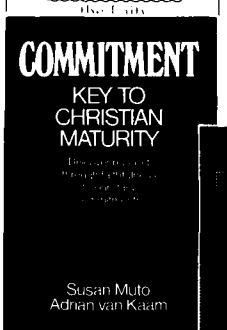

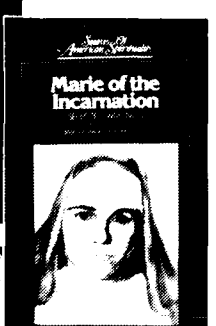

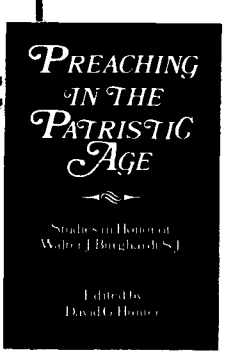

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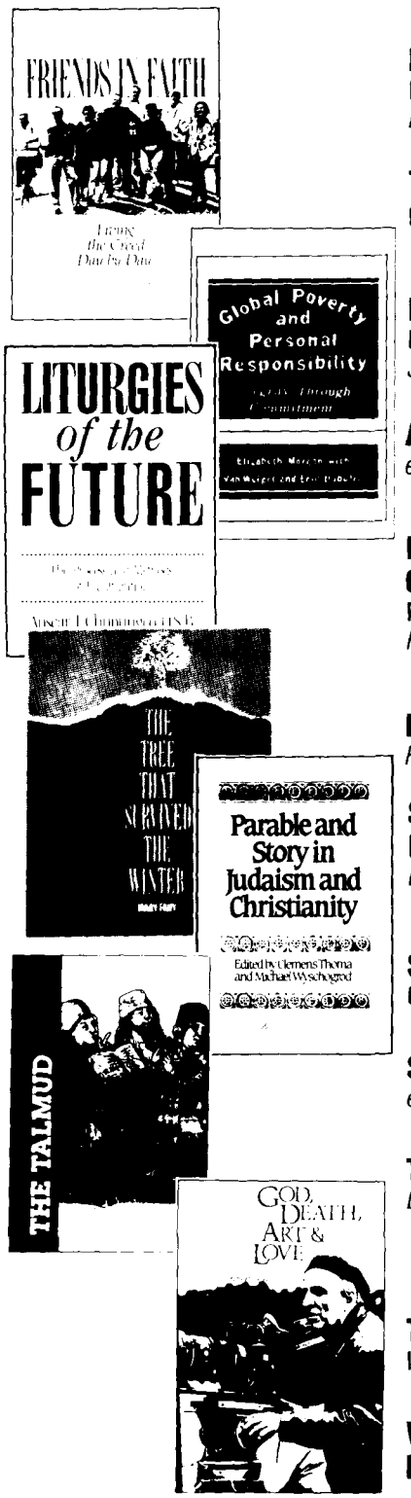
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professors, and other refugees—have sought alternative community: the college campus. We roll up our sleeves and work at community. We don't want to take refuge in comfortable intellectuality, in safe middle-class uniformity and smugness, in high-minded liberal-sounding rhetoric. In itself, that is a struggle.

Meanwhile, back at the kitchen table, a small boy knocks and walks in: "My ma told me that when I was baptized you mothers and fathers all promised to help raise me a Christian. You helped your godchild last week, he told me so. So can you help me—cause you promised? Help me get ready for my first Communion?"

So we bake bread together, Matt and I. We even bake the Eucharistic offering here at this kitchen table. We grind up some whole wheat kernels I have here—whole seeds that could produce plants if tucked into the earth, or flour if ground.

"Here, Matt, you can stir up the warm water into this bowl."

Then in small fistfuls he adds flour. A fistful for his parents and his little sister. One for his friend Michael, for his neighbor, for each of his friends, for the people in the pews on Sunday. Now one for all the things he's afraid of: feeling bad, feeling left out, scary dreams. Now one for the poor, for the sick and lonely, for the forgotten and homeless. By now he is kneading and tucking; all the ragged edges get tucked into the middle. Roll, push, pat. He has one neat, tight ball of bread to flatten out and put in the oven. On Sunday, he will bring this offering to the altar holding it high on the wooden plate. Here we are, God. All of me and all my heart and all of these people here tucked up tightly into this one bread. Please accept our gift, the work of our own hands. And may your holy Word take our own flesh and live among us. Somehow, in spite of us, it always does.

GERTRUD MUELLER NELSON

Gertrud Mueller Nelson is an author, artist, and lecturer living in San Diego. Her works include To Dance with God *(Paulist Press),* Clip-Art for Feasts and Seasons, *and* Clip-Art for Celebrations and Service *(Pueblo Publishing Co.).*

A study in contrasts

On a recent European visit, I had the opportunity to test firsthand Paul Dinter's observations ("Standing in the Way of Worship," June 16) of the clergy's resistance to particular liturgical reforms in some European parishes.

It was late Sunday afternoon in mid-June, when I stepped into the dark apse of St. Stephen's Church in Vienna to attend Mass in German. The organ pealed out splendidly, the people sang, and the exchange of peace was warm, yet the liturgy as a whole was disconcerting. The Mass was led entirely by males—two priests, one altar boy, and a song leader—who executed their roles perfunctorily. We, the co-celebrants, were reduced to spectators, distant from the liturgical action. The altar boy doubled as a lector; one of the priests brought the gifts from a side table two steps away; even the prayer of the faithful was read by a priest. All of this seemed to confirm Paul Dinter's observations.

Unexpectedly, the following week, I had a rousing and contrasting experience at the Saturday evening Mass in Ebreichsdorf, a small nearby farming village. On the day of my visit, a dynamic young priest was to be installed as pastor.

The elegant, miniature church was overflowing with worshipers, many of whom celebrated by wearing the national costumes of Austria. In the center aisle uniformed Pathfinder guides (male and female scout leaders) and scouts stood throughout the service.

As the long entrance procession squeezed itself through the crowd, I noticed red-robed altar girls as well as boys. The local baron opened with a welcoming speech; a woman parishioner gave another; two lectors—a man and a woman—proclaimed the Scriptures and led the prayer of the faithful; a bishop preached; a layman brought the gifts to the altar. Because there were so many priests, the lay eucharistic ministers did not distribute Communion.

The music was well-prepared and ample. It included drums, guitar, flute, organ, and at least one song by the St. Louis Jesuits (in German), all led by a young woman cantor. The people—especially the men—sang out forcefully.

Scenes like these belong in the church's liturgical memory and in discussions of present and future reform.

KAREN SUE SMITH

Karen Sue Smith is an associate editor of Commonweal *and directs the Iona Center for Pastoral Liturgy at Iona College, New Rochelle, N.Y.*

Our Right & Duty

Paul Dinter argues that the evidence is clear: twenty-five years after the *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* we have not grasped in practice the renewal that Vatican II ratified and chartered. Yes, we have made changes galore, but the results are not encouraging. He notes especially the failure of priests to assimilate the very foundation of the reform and he points to two practices that would bear this out: the mishandling of the preparation of the gifts and table and the still nearly universal practice of using previously consecrated bread from the tabernacle for the Communion of some or all of the assembly.

I find these two rather strange partners. Would Dinter make the preparation of the gifts into a major element of what our eucharistic liturgy expresses? He should not. Yes, the bread and wine, along with support for the poor and the church, are to be

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gathered in the rather quiet moments after the intercessions and before we are ready to lift up our hearts. Yes, these gifts come from the assembly (as do everyone and everything at the liturgy). Yes, it matters very much that they be ample, that they be handled with reverence, that the table be prepared with care and dignity. That's wonderful, but that's it. Efforts to read more into this portion of the rite are unwelcome. Let's do the preparation part well. But let's not load it down with the tasks of the Eucharistic Prayer itself. For if the Eucharistic Prayer in the reformed liturgy has failed practically to engage the assembly, why set out to repair it elsewhere? Instead, fix what is broken. That is task enough.

Dinter's criticisms of the Communion rite are my own. I have waged a minor crusade about the failure to heed the clear directives that call for the use of a large bread that is broken and shared by the assembly, presider included. When numbers are too great, the instructions allow for there to be other loaves to be broken. But the presumption is clear: The bread and wine for this Eucharist, done by these people, is to come from them; it is the very bread and wine over which they join the presider in praising and thanking God (Eucharistic Prayer); and it is all and the only bread and wine for Communion of the whole assembly, presider included. This is not some liturgical nicety. It goes to the very heart of how we conceive the Eucharist. If we believe that we attend a sometimes lovely and sometimes boring long prayer by the priest and then go to Communion, preconsecrated bread from the tabernacle makes good sense. If we believe that we are an assembly of baptized people, and that what we do is not "attend" but bless and praise and give thanks—and that it matters greatly that we do this—then we cannot even conceive of running to the tabernacle for bread. Does it matter? The former attitude will never, whatever the rhetoric, know that all baptized persons have rights and duties around this table.

Dinter understands the failure of liturgical reform in terms of the clergy's unwillingness to yield power. I'm not so sure that's all there is to it. I think the failure, as far as the ordained go, is exactly what the bishops at Vatican II foresaw. When, in paragraph 14 of the *Constitution*, they said *why* they were doing this (liturgy is the primary and indispensable source of the true Christian spirit) and *what* was the aim of the whole reform (that participation by the whole assembly which liturgy demands and which is the duty and right of the baptized), they said in the same breath, what had to happen *or else*: "It would be futile to entertain any hopes of realizing this unless, in the first place, the pastors themselves become thoroughly imbued with the spirit and power of the liturgy and make themselves its teachers." A generation later, many things have been done, but that central warning has not been heeded. It was easier to adjust all the rites, translate the language, do hundreds of other tasks. And it would be easier to do even what Dinter suggests: get the clergy beyond games of power. But how do we, all of us, get "imbued" with the spirit and power of the liturgy? That's a much different task.

One factor, and a needed note on Dinter's article, is that one-shot successes count for little. The parish that is concerned about liturgy is working on the space, the music, the order that can be theirs every Sunday when the assembly gathers for Eucharist. They are concerned that this music and this order belong to everyone, that liturgy never become entertainment or inspiration, but the by-heart deed that baptized people need to do in their assemblies. They are concerned that this Sunday assembly also have the rites of each morning and night, of seasons and feast days and fast days that keep the church the church.

How do I think it's going? Slowly. The Midwest has a deserved reputation for leadership, one that goes back long before Vatican II and that has to do, perhaps, with the centers for liturgical "imbuing"—Conception Abbey in Missouri and Saint John's in Minnesota among others—where generations of laity and clergy were trained. It has to do with the ground work done in the 1930s and 1940s by laity and pastors in urban and rural areas of the Midwest. (One expression of this is the first of the annual Liturgical Weeks which was held here in Chicago fifty years ago next year.) But it is still not easy to find a parish where liturgy is taken as our right and duty, our own, and always the church's. The optimism of the pioneers did not, perhaps, count on what these times would be. GABE HUCK

Gabe Huck is director of Liturgy Training Publications *in Chicago.*

Nothing to Come Home to

Can you tell a church by its cover? I think you can. That is why it always puzzles me that the facades of most churches say so little. Here is a building that supposedly stands for something extraordinary—a building whose whole fabric should assert to a pluralistic and indifferent community a belief in the risen Jesus—but that normally says very little. Just think: the people of this church have this whole façade with which to announce their good news to the world. Like E. B. White's Charlotte the spider they should bear in mind the virtue of brevity and keep their message simple. It might be "Jesus is risen!" or "Christ died for us all," or just "Hope," bannered and billowing across the face of the church. But none of these messages is chosen. Rather there blazes forth one bold and ringing word: BINGO!

Can anyone doubt the priorities of such a place? Can anyone claim that in such a building the Spirit may be encountered?

We reveal our true selves in our trappings. Try though we may, we all, by our physical presences, tell who we are, for: "Each mortal thing does one thing and the same/ Deals out that being indoors each one dwells...." There is nowhere to hide, not, at least, if you are a material body.

Some mornings in East Harlem I pass a U.C.C. church, a little, unimposing brick building dominated by crack-infested projects and burned-out shells, once tenements, where the homeless maintain homes. Apart from the church's announcement of its name and schedule of services, there is one sign: a cross at ground level, constructed of charred and jagged beams

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massive enough to hold the body of a grown man. Something, I am sure, goes on in that church, something holy and healing.

Paul Dinter, a priest of the Archdiocese of New York, tells us that he was shocked to find that the *Constitution on the Liturgy* is ignored in Europe. He didn't need to go so far from home. The constitution is ignored in his own diocese. I have yet to find a Catholic church within the Archdiocese of New York (apart from the occasional college chapel or order church) where the English-language liturgy is conducted with anything remotely approaching reverence, intelligence, and feeling.

Soon after he became the archbishop of New York, Cardinal John O'Connor hired a top Madison Avenue firm to create slogans to get people to come back to church. The first read: "This Christmas...come home again." I, who with my wife and children have spent years of numberless Sundays in search of (not a perfect church, God help us) a possible church, ask: come home again to what? There is nothing to come home to—unless, perhaps, you are blind, tone-deaf, and mentally asleep. But even if you could not see the crudely assembled *mise-en-scene* (the knotty pine sanctuary hung with execrable flannel bunting, the hosts taken out of the deep freeze just prior to Communion, the wine for the priest alone), even if you could not hear the single voice in screeched responses or the instrument (organ, piano, or guitar) played by someone who cannot count (never mind play), even if you were too simple to apprehend intellectually that the sermon was unprepared and uninspired and that the super-miked celebrant depended for his presentation more on Johnny Carson than on John Chrysostom, you would still feel the emptiness of the enterprise. You would know in your bones that something essential was missing. The only reason to endure all this is that you fear your soul is damned if you do not.

We, who must live in the world of birth, copulation, and death, who are committed to the Christian formation of children (our own and others), who try to witness in our families that the world does not and cannot have the last word but that Christ is risen indeed, hallelujah! know how little support the official church gives us in our struggles. The cardinal talks incessantly about the dangers to teenagers of contemporary culture. If he believes what he says, why does he offer us no believable Eucharist? I am tired of fighting alone. Why are the clergy blind to the real needs of the people? Why can they offer no credible, shining alternative Sign? Why do they look on with equanimity as millions leave the church for good? Three-quarters, at least, of churchgoers now under the age of eighteen will be permanently lost to Catholicism (most of these lost to Christianity in any form) and virtually all because of what happens, or doesn't happen, in church.

In Luke's Gospel, the most physically observant Gospel, we read that the people tried to touch Jesus as he moved through the crowd, because "power came out from him that cured them all." They weren't imagining things. Power did come out, does come out from him—palpable power that the simplest people know they are receiving. But only a very great mystic could perceive the power in the claptrap, pseudo-liturgies that are served up to us.

In John's Gospel, the most sacramental Gospel, we read that Jesus healed a blind man by applying to his eyes a paste of earth and his own spit. See the man's sad, sightless eyes set in his grotesque face. Touch the healer's brow, full of sweat-streaming pores, as he toils over the mess he has made in his large, calloused hands. Hear his words: "Go wash in the water of the Messenger." This is Jesus, wholly man, wholly God, curing his brother's flesh and spirit with a mixture of the good earth and his own substance. This is sacramental action. This, a simple, creative gesture that really does what it claims to do, that "deals out" the interior being of the healer, is the medium of our human encounter with the living God.

It would be convenient to lay our miserable state of affairs at the feet of the ordained clergy. But they are our clergy, sprung from our loins and hearts. The deep problem lies where it always has: in our inability to believe in the full humanity of Jesus of Nazareth and, thus, to accept our own. THOMAS CAHILL

Thomas Cahill is co-author of A Literary Guide to Ireland *and author of* Looking for Books. *He was for twelve years publisher and editor of the* Cahill & Co. Reader's Catalogue, *and is now editor of* The Bookperson.

Who's Got the Power?

The varying degrees of anger and frustration evident in the foregoing responses are a good indication that I've tapped a raw nerve in the Mystical Body. Like Tom Cahill, I fear the alienation of thinking and feeling young Catholic adults. With Gertrud Mueller Nelson I believe that kneading bread for the Eucharist is both educative and incarnational; but what do we say to young Matt when Father doesn't let his loaf be brought to the altar? This question leads me to quibble with Gabe Huck's failure to grasp why "the pastors themselves" have not become imbued with "the spirit and power of the liturgy," and to wonder at his assertion that it should somehow be "easier" to "get the clergy beyond games of power."

My point, which both Mueller Nelson and Huck seem to miss, is that the unspoken and unconscious *Why?* behind the pastor's refusal of Matt's eucharistic bread and our pastors' failure to be "imbued with the spirit and power of the liturgy" lies in the model of sacramental power still operative in priestly circles (and in some seminaries in the northeast!). This model short-circuits the task of "imbuing" pastors with the power of the sacramental liturgy because they were taught that it was *their* power that made the liturgy happen. It is not "games of power" but an ideology of clericalism that is at work. Until this ideology is replaced with a more holistic notion of how the sacraments effect grace (and perhaps the Midwest is doing better than the other areas), the "spirit and power of the liturgy" and its ability to engage all the baptized will remain an untapped potential for the People of God. PAUL E. DINTER

Rev. Paul E. Dinter is presently serving as administrator of the Church of Saints Philip and James, Bronx, New York.

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POEMS
Walter Pavlich

The Hand Beginning to Burn

If you wake the coals
at night with your hoe,
if you scratch off
their burnt coats,
there is the skylight
into the earth, there in
the orange polish and
breathing.

The squirrels will
not fly over it. The poor
will not chase dimes
down there. Boots smoke,
soles like boiling tacks.
You submerge to
your knees. Don't push
down on the glow.

A hand beginning to burn—
fingers an infusion of bees

arrive at your face—the hive
that isn't there.

Flying to the Fire with the Doors Off

Above lodgepole, ponderosa,
tamarack, a sharp drunk globe out
of balance, the world back-spinning,
under and behind us. I'm listening
for the treetops scratching
our ship's belly, the pilot
with folded beer cans behind his seat,
and you leaning out, shouting as we tap
into an updraft just before the next ridge.

We are lightning's employees,
mountain-scrapers, twice the water
in our canteens that we piss out.
You are upslope in the smoke,
sparks spitting on you, where you shouldn't
be, daring the fire to step over
your gashed line. I am
where it started, calling
calling. The flames flaring up
the underside of your name.

(for Bruce Latimer)

Hardhat Pillow

I am
an outline in the ash.
Others sleep without moving,
nailed down by weariness.
Roots burn circuits beneath us.
My axe won't kill any more
shadows tonight. A fuse and wet
fingers touch in each of us.
I am too tired for water.
Tomorrow we'll find two sparrow
anatomies that did the fire–
dive off the power lines,
fell to start this one.

They'll write the checks for next
month's bills. They'll feed
us. Their small decisions brought
us here, the coolest place
in the fire. A thunderhead
passes over, scattering us
in any direction. Mine—
a mercury drop swimming
around the palm of a hand.
No, a pearl
of rain slipping out of
the wind-tipped skillet
of a nasturtium leaf.

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COMBUSTIBLE VIGILANTES

'CASUALTIES OF WAR' & 'BATMAN'

Director Brian DePalma, who can track and dolly and splatter blood with the best of them, brings an uncharacteristic moral fervor to *Casualties of War*. Adapted by playwright David Rabe (*Streamers*) from Daniel Lang's factual 1969 report on the kidnapping, rape, and murder of a Vietnamese girl by a group of American soldiers, this tragic story is boldly realized on the screen.

With films like *Carrie*, *Body Double*, and *The Untouchables*, DePalma established himself as an extraordinary visual stylist. So the straightforward narrative of *Casualties of War* is disarming, as though the Rolling Stones had turned to folk music. Although the story moves and the pictures flow with DePalma's usual fluidity, the film has a restrained—indeed, a juridical—tone. It's a powerful movie and a chilling indictment.

DePalma begins with a shameless bit of type-casting. Bad guy Sean Penn (*Colors*) is set opposite fresh-faced Michael J. Fox, the All-American charmer who wooed and won the nation for seven years on TV's *Family Ties* and then gilded the lily with *Back to the Future*. Fox plays Army Pfc Eriksson, a raw recruit plunged into the heart of darkness only weeks after arriving in Vietnam. Penn plays Sergeant Meserve, an all but cannibalistic Mr. Kurtz.

Meserve, a twenty-year-old combat veteran and squad leader, has lost whatever fragile grasp he had of the difference between combat and murder, the enemy and the innocent. As his ever-eager subordinate Corporal Clark (Don Harvey) tells the board of court-marshal, "If you throw guys like us in the stockade, you're helping no one but the Viet Cong."

Meserve is a brave man and a killer, indispensable traits in any soldier, and qualities for which his men respect and follow him. But the uncertainties and inconclusiveness of the Vietnam war and the constant horror of combat turn him against all moral authority. "He's Genghis Khan," proclaims the most dim-witted of his men, and a noble savage beyond the reach of ordinary laws. In extracting his personal revenge against the Vietnamese, Meserve will brook no opposition from those under his command.

This combustible vigilante would seem to be a role Penn, known for his volatility on and off the screen, should slip into effortlessly. But he doesn't quite make it. In Penn's uncertain hands, this familiar movie warrior becomes a caricature of the sadistic NCO of military lore. Penn's bluster is too studied; there's something worried and rabbit-like in his eyes, and he snarls too much. Physically, he isn't as overbearing as he should be. Worst of all, he talks out of the side of his mouth in a kind of garbled slur, a cross between Marlon Brando's "Godfodda" and one of the Dead End Kids. He's a peculiarly self-conscious kind of monster.

Fox, whose considerable comic gifts might have marked him popularly as a lightweight, does better. True, screenwriter Rabe gives him some crushing and ingenuous lines. "This is kidnapping, isn't it?" he asks Meserve, and later, "Maybe it (doing the right thing) matters more than we ever know." But if anyone can hold our attention while putting over a stark moral proposition, Fox, with his open but knowing face, can.

Due to the premeditated and gratuitous nature of the atrocity, Eriksson's choice almost seems too clear-cut. Whether he will have the moral and psychological strength to resist Meserve's intimidation is the more compelling question. Eriksson is torn between the loyalty soldiers rightfully expect from each other and the unmistakable demands of conscience. Deftly, Fox gives us all of this modest young man's doubts and fears as well as his stubborn, almost childlike refusal to capitulate.

Casualties of War falters, I think, in imposing the relatively sophisticated vocabulary of sexual politics on the rape scene. Meserve's speech, in which he metaphorically equates male sexuality with weaponry and the instruments of war with children's playthings, is too rhetorical. These are unlikely sentiments to come out of this character's mouth. Equally strained are the sexual taunts and threats to which Eriksson is subjected. All of this would have been more effective as subtext.

DePalma succeeds brilliantly, however, in sustaining the long, nauseating terror of the woman's sexual torture and

Daniel James Sundahl

Sketch of a Young Woman Picking Fruit

Standing on a ladder thinking
She must not fall even if the best
Hang far out along a thin branch.

She lifts herself up another rung,
Her small hands weave branches aside,
Her bright mouth opens to the sun.

What shines in the leaves
Has dangled there all season;
Instead of decay, a fragrant red.

To see it fall would make more sense,
Assuming the sketch is mortal fatigue,
Or a woman acting according to her will.

To see her hold it is soothing to the heart,
Is to live each day with endless assent,
Her smile meaning that it was her will.

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eventual murder. It is one of *Casualties of War*'s great achievements that the rape scene, which easily could have been sensationalized, deepens but does not compete with the ultimate horror of her murder. There is an operatic excess and truth in her death that focuses the mind on the enormity of evil in ways only a few movies can. Even in the midst of the absolute savagery of a guerrilla war, her murder cries out for justice and atonement.

Casualties of War does not try to capture the chaos and horror of combat in Vietnam with the sweeping assurance of Oliver Stone's *Platoon*. DePalma wants a tighter focus. There is a rare moral and theatrical eloquence here.

Any movie that can dispense with the services of the magnificently flat-nosed Jack Palance without breaking stride must have something supernatural going for it. With Jack Nicholson's clown suits and its stunning vertiginous cityscape out of M.C. Escher, *Batman* obviously does. No one will mistake director Tim Burton's (*Beetlejuice*) mock comic-book epic for anything but a gay bauble, but *Batman* does dazzle the eye and numb the brain in a pleasing fashion. Even the Batmobile has a winning, campy Sphinx-like quality. The envy of every urban car-owner, it hermetically seals itself up when left on the street. As Nicholson's lunatic Joker observes about his adversary, Batman has some wonderful toys.

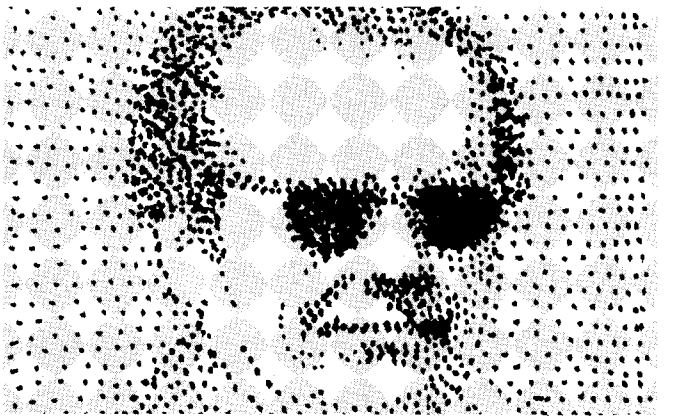
Nicholson, who eliminates rival gangster Palance early on, is reported to have told co-star Michael Keaton that some roles require that an actor just "let the suit do the work." And what suits! The Joker, with his twisted features, psychotic ditherings, and obscene confidences, is an old and somewhat tattered piece of material. Nicholson has been leering and raving like this since he puffed on that fatal joint in *Easy Rider*. But in his lickerish and rowdy way, he still makes it work. In fact, this resourceful actor is overwhelming as the scourge of hapless Gotham City.

Batman suffers from too much Joker and not enough straight men. Nicholson needs someone as wantonly charismatic as himself—someone like Palance? or Shirley MacLaine?—to fight the camera for.

Keaton's impersonation of the righteous nocturnal crusader is not bad. Keaton obviously took Nicholson's advice to heart, and he doesn't try to fight the suit. When trussed up in leotards and plastic bat ears, he's formidable. Keaton's Promethean jaw seems strangely menacing, and when he drops The Joker into a vat of green acid something wild and weird is happening behind the mask. He will be back in this suit again soon.

Batman's dark Manichaean—or is it only mammalian?—soul is the subject of dramatic insinuations. He is, it is broadly hinted at, tempted by the forces of darkness. After all, what else explains the suits, the cave life, the appetite for violence, or the polished collection of medieval armor? But it is best not to delve too deeply into the engima of this kind of goodness in the daylight.

Keaton's few appearances as Bruce Wayne, the millionaire civic do-gooder Batman reverts to in the morning, are less



interesting. Wayne's pensive seduction of inquiring photographer Vicki Vale (Kim Basinger) is all a coy flapping of wings, without much danger of rabies shots in the future. Having Wayne sleep hanging upside down from a metal bar is a nice touch, however.

Batman is thick through the middle, but the belfry climax is a visual treat and a bright comic Punch-and-Judy show. Burton puts lots of energy and expert sleight of hand into this entertainment, and he delivers on time and while it's still hot. His vision of the futuristic comic-book city is drawn with a precocious schoolboy's determination to impress, and it does.

PAUL BAUMANN

Paul Baumann is a staff writer and movie critic for The Day *in New London, Connecticut. He is filling in for Tom O'Brien, who is on vacation.*

STAGE

STANDING UP FOR ONE'S OWN

GEOGHAN'S 'ONLY KIDDING'

Perhaps this is a kinder, gentler America after all. In 1950, Garson Kanin's *The Live Wire* opened on Broadway; it was about a group of actors who shared a Quonset hut while they struggled to succeed in the theater. It was the selfish one, the manipulative one, the malignant one who made it big, leaving the communal nest he had fouled on his way to Hollywood heaven. In 1989, Jim Geoghan's *Only Kidding*! opened off-Broadway, after an earlier production by the American Jewish Theater; it is about standup comedians struggling to reach the summit of their profession, a spot on the "Buddy King (i.e., Johnny Carson) Show." Although the selfish one, the malignant one tries to be manipulative (as Leo says in *The Live Wire*, "nobody looks out for Daddy if *Daddy* don't look out for Daddy"), the good guys defeat him, leaving him knocked out cold on the floor of Buddy King's green room, felled by an ice bucket, while the good-guy comic is knocking the audience dead.

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Geoghan began as a standup comic, spending eight years on his feet before he sat down and became a playwright. Paul Provenza, who plays Jerry Goldstein, the villain of the piece, is a successful standup comedian, having performed on all the correct TV variety programs, including the "Johnny Carson Show." Between them, they should know the business well enough to get the milieu right, which they seem to have done.

In the first act, in two completely separate scenes, we meet all the principals who will come together in the second. The first scene takes place in the Catskills where Jackie Dwayne, an old-time master of the borrowed one-liner, is failing once again and where Sheldon Kelinski, a gag writer for Buddy King, comes, at their shared agent's insistence, to try to save his act. Their styles are inimical—Sheldon with his briefcase and pencil sharpener, Jackie with his mental file of other people's jokes—although Sheldon, also a joke collector of sorts, not only knows all Jackie's punch lines but who first used the gags. Jackie, flamboyantly foul-mouthed, explains that the way to win an audience is to choose a victim from a front table and make her (his example is a fat lady) the butt of nasty remarks that turn the rest of the audience against her. The second scene takes place in the basement of a cheap nightclub where Jerry and his partner, Tom Kelly, have just finished their act—apparently a semisurreal character bit—and where the partnership comes apart as Jerry insists on signing a contract with Sal, the mafia-connected club owner. Tom is the quiet partner, devoted to the art of comedy. Jerry is the hyper one, fueled not only by ambition but by drink and drugs as well.

In the three years between acts, Tom has become a writer for Buddy King; Sheldon has been promoted to an amorphous job as majordomo of the green room; Jackie has had a by-pass operation (he clutched his chest in the first act) and has become a transformed character; and Jerry, thanks to Sal's connections, is presumably a rising young comic, but what we see is an aggressively hysterical man, dependent on booze and drugs, who, like the Jackie of the first act, is unable to get his routine together. They all meet in the green room on the night that both Jackie and Jerry are to appear, but Jerry, using Sal, maneuvers to get Jackie bumped from the show. His vanity and his fear of failure are so strong that he savages everyone around him, finally provoking the gentle Sheldon to pick up the ice bucket. Jackie goes on in his place and, as Sheldon and Tom watch the monitor that we cannot see, the laughter tells us—and them—that Jackie is achieving the success that Jerry tried to steal from him. Provenza as Jerry is flesh-crawlingly convincing in this scene, but then the performances—some of which are written on a single note—are generally good in the production, including, on the night I saw the piece, understudy Jerry Grayson as Sal.

This review must sound plottier than my columns usually do, but it is difficult to dredge too much significance from a show called *Only Kidding*! A generalization on standup comedy, perhaps, but mine would probably not be Geoghan's. Jackie's new routine, the only extended comic sequence we get, is a narrative based on his heart attack in which he is his own comic butt. It is happily presented without self-pity, the usual stock-in-trade of the vulnerability comics, but aggression, aimed outward or inward, provides the two main genres of psychological comedy. As for political satire, what we hear of the offstage Buddy King opener is as innocuous and ideologically empty as its counterparts from Johnny Carson. It is bad-mouthing, Bob Hope style—the kind that gets you invited to the White House. Standup comedy is flourishing with comedy clubs proliferating in most cities, as Geoghan indicates in a recent article in the *New York Times*. He quotes Provenza: "Standup comedy today is like an all-you-can-eat buffet. There's a lot of variety but it all tastes the same." I feel that way about even the most successful comics. You can hate yourself or hate someone else, but you need not take your cultural context seriously. I doubt that that is what *Only Kidding*! wants to say.

In an interview essay by Louis Botto in *Playbill* (August 1989), Geoghan thanks Joseph Scott Kierland, "a terrific structuralist" (presumably not in the sense that word has around faculty clubs these days) who runs a playwriting lab, and gives him credit for the ending. The gritty texture of the play and the comic lines—funny and not funny—presumably come from Geoghan. The roseate finish is not implicit in the characters or their world. One of the actors in *The Live Wire*, faced with Leo's triumph, says, "trouble with me is I was brought up on Alger books and a few Frank Merriwells. And cowboy pictures—and happy endings. I got so I believed 'em." Geoghan and Kierland and audiences still do apparently. Maybe only on stage. A fictional world in which success involves getting up off the sleaze floor and climbing Mt. Bland may, even if it is only kidding, suggest that this may not be a kinder, gentler America.

GERALD WEALES

Beyond the call

Anne Robertson was the most patient person I have ever known. In more than twenty years that I have been reviewing plays for *Commonweal*, she had the really difficult job of calling press representatives and calling them again and calling them still again to explain why the reviewer for a magazine with so small a circulation had to have tickets on the day of his choosing. She was as patient with me as she was with the publicity people. Although I had a way of calling her on a day in which she was trying to do forty-eight things at once—which would have been almost any day—that wonderful, welcoming voice of hers seemed to indicate that nothing could have pleased her more at the moment than finding me and my demands at the other end of the line. I shall miss that voice. I shall miss Anne. I suspect that she is one of the few really good people I have ever known. G. W.

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Haiti's brief hour of hope

JOHN P. HOGAN

Much of the hope for a post-Duvalier Haiti can be summed up in the central theme of the Catholic church's literacy campaign, launched in 1985. The name of the textbook and driving metaphor behind the campaign was *Goute Sel*, the Creole for "Taste Salt." With obvious reference to the Gospel's injunction to be the salt of the earth, the phrase was also readily recognizable in Haiti's voodoo context. Salt is given to the comatose, enslaved zombie, the walking dead, to help one come alive and return to free human existence. This summed up Haitian hopes, especially since the forced departure of Jean-Claude Duvalier on February 7, 1986.

Today hope is in short supply; confusion and despair are growth industries. Baby Doc left and Haiti was ruled by a military-controlled junta under Generals Namphy and Regala. Although placating the U.S. State Department by preaching "the road to democracy," "Duvalierism without Duvalier" was the rule. An overwhelming turn-out to vote on a progressive constitution on March 29, 1987, was followed by a bloody summer and fall of strikes, military repression, massacres, and mass arrests. Since 10 A.M. on election day, November 29, 1987, the day has been known as "Bloody Sunday." Uniformed soldiers and Tontons Macoute with machetes mowed down people waiting in line to vote. Namphy proceeded with his own agenda and set the stage for the bogus elections of January 17, 1988. Apparently Leslie Manigat was the only candidate willing to prostitute himself totally to the barracks. When the rotund professor opposed Namphy in June, 1988, he quickly found himself at the Concord Hotel in Santo Domingo and Namphy found himself back in the presidential palace. Namphy's thirst for power and, apparently, for rum, finally led to his collusion with the worst of the old Duvalierist forces. In September 1988, he collaborated with the notorious Macoute major of Port-au-Prince, Franck Romain, in the gruesome murders at St. Jean Bosco Church. This led to his downfall and on September 17, 1988, he was given a one-way ticket to the same suite in Santo Domingo that Manigat had occupied. This time around, Haiti found itself being led by yet another of Papa Doc's protégés, General Prosper Avril.

HAITI
Amy Wilentz

The Rainy Season, *Simon & Schuster, $19.95, 427 pp.*

A number of threads run through these events: the brutal killing of opposition leaders; the shooting of peaceful demonstrators; the arrest, harassment, and killing of community leaders and peasant organizers. One characteristic stands out. The opposition usually functioned under a broad protective umbrella of Catholic church organizations. Therefore, the bloody attack on St. Jean Bosco's can only be interpreted as a final attempt to pull the umbrella of cover from church militants and in particular the diminutive, outspoken Salesian priest, Father Jean Bertrand Aristide, firebrand preacher, opposition leader, and chaplain to the street kids.

In *The Rainy Season*, Amy Wilentz captures these events in a kind of psychedelic walk, or, better, run, through Haiti's house of mirrors. While the book suffers from cheap shots, fired, for instance, at Protestant missionaries and the papal nuncio and too much journalistic banter picked up at the Hotel Oloffson bar, it provides a window on the complex reality that is Haiti. We have grown numb to statistics that tell us that the real average income in Haiti is less than one dollar a day, that almost 50 percent of its children die before the age of five, and that 80 percent of the population cannot read or write. The Duvaliers left Haiti in a zombie state and the heir-apparent generals have proven totally inept at bringing it back to life.

Having lived in the same neighborhood as Wilentz during the events she describes, I found myself deeply moved by her account. I, too, saw the bodies left in the street for hours as an example to other would-be "agitators." I also visited the twelve-year-old-boy who had his arm blown off. My eleven-year-old daughter became an expert on identifying the difference between M-16, Uzi, and regular rifle fire. She, like Wilentz, learned quickly where the good places to hide were.

Wilentz arrived in Haiti expecting to write on the brutal reign of Baby Doc and the Macoutes. Instead she found herself amidst "priests (who) were openly at the vanguard of an uprising, the Macoutes were frightened, insecure, and the government informer was no longer sure who was bankrolling him. The Duvaliers were on their way out.... It seemed like a joke at my expense." She soon found herself with little to joke about and much to write about. She offers an eyewitness account of some of the major public events and

JOHN P. HOGAN *has recently returned from Haiti where he was director of Catholic Relief Services.*

The illustration which appears on page 506 has been circulating throughout churches in Haiti for several months. The artist is unknown.

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fills page after page with direct dialogue. Her grasp of voodoo is both serious and sensitive; her depictions of ceremonies are graphic and illuminating. One is easily caught up in the sweat, rum, and relief its happy exhaustion can offer the desperate peasant.

Central to the book is the place and role of Father Aristide or Pe Titid, as he is called in Haiti. Wilentz recounts their first meeting. "We're glad Duvalier is gone.... That's why we seem so happy. But this is not the end of the affair, by a long shot.... What we have now is Duvalierism without Duvalier." Aristide turned out to be right. He is, for many Haitians, a prophet. Haiti's bloody history and most especially recent events are filtered through the lens of Aristide's political and theological positions.

I have much sympathy for most of Wilentz's retelling of these events and the dashed hope they represent. Her accounts of the attack on the group of priests at Frecyneau in August 1987, and the massacre at St. Jean Bosco are particularly well done. The complexities surrounding the expulsion of Aristide from the Salesians, however, are not as clearly spelled out, perhaps because they were still unfolding at the time Wilentz wrote. In spite of daily protest marches by thousands of young people and letters of support from a large segment of the Haitian clergy, Aristide was expelled from his order on November 8, 1988. The Salesian press communique, confirmed by the Vatican's Congregation for Religious, accused the priest of inciting the faithful to violence and class warfare and profanation of the liturgy. This symbol of the church's commitment to Haiti's poor was silenced. While it cannot be denied that Aristide was acerbic and outspoken, it likewise cannot be denied that the church's umbrella of cover for opposition, development, and democracy had been by then torn to smithereens.

Although the book is short on analysis, a strong point in this almost stream-of-consciousness account is the author's willingness to put Haiti's political present in a long-term perspective. She does this by a series of flashbacks into Haitian history. She gradually realized that the palace is not all of Haiti and that the legacy from Toussaint L'Ouverture and Dessalines to the Duvaliers lives on in the deep divisions of class, culture, race, and religion. Haiti has long been wedged between fear and hope. As a friend pointed out to Wilentz, "[t]he long view kept discouragement at bay. It doesn't matter which actor is playing the role, it is still always Namphy and Manigat, the army and the corrupt politicians. Until we change things for real. Until the people move. One day they will you know. That revolution has been boiling in our blood for too long now. It will come." That would also be Aristide's view and probably the only one with any long-range hope. However, no form has yet been mapped out for that "real change." Haitians are not interested in solutions manufactured in Washington. This is certain and is a bone in the throat of American policy in the Caribbean.

My only disagreement with Wilentz's account comes from its lack of analysis concerning the church's role in social change. Although this is only one part of her book, it is an important part. A broader historical view of the church would have avoided some oversimplifications which appear to lump the nuncio at once with Colonel Jean-Claude Paul and American imperialism, and simplistically identify the Haitian bishops with Duvalierism. While the nuncio and the bishops have reneged on their earlier stand and lost their leadership roles, the picture is more complicated than Wilentz allows. When I arrived in Haiti in February 1987, every crisis brought Haiti's masses to the nearest radio to listen to Radio Soleil to hear what the bishops would say. Today their messages evoke little response.

James Kelly, who lived in Haiti in 1987, does a much better job of capturing the nuances in the senior thesis he wrote at Harvard. Kelly uses the Haitian proverb, "*Roche nan dlo pa konnin lapenn roche nan solez*" ("Rocks in the water don't know the pain of rocks in the sun"). This Creole proverb sums up much of the relationship between the church and Haitian politics. Kelly states, "During the first century of its institutional presence in the Republic of Haiti, the church shared the wealth and status of the elite segment of the population. The problem of the exploited masses drew a compassionate response out of only a small minority of the clergy and religious. Only after François Duvalier pushed the church out of the water and into the sunlight, did pastoral action on behalf of the poor in Haiti become prevalent." But there is no doubt about it, pastoral action on behalf of the poor and oppressed did become the thrust of a large portion of the Haitian church, and the bishops, even if at times reluctantly, courageously supported such pastoral action. Wilentz seems unaware of this evolution.

Beginning roughly in 1976, the Haitian church entered into a strong commitment to evangelization, social justice, and defense of the poor. A grass-roots but still publicly timid church inspired by Vatican II, Medellin, and Puebla gained tremendous impetus when John Paul II declared in 1983 in Port-au-Prince that "things must change." Bishops, priests, sisters, brothers, and lay activists who had defended the poor from hiding places were now able to fight in the open. They could count on cover from the official church. The effort on behalf of the rights of the poor, development, and democracy grew so strong that many credited the church, particularly the bishops, with a large share in the downfall of Baby Doc. Papa Doc had replaced the foreign bishops with what he thought were safe men. In some cases they were, but a few eventually

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chose a different course. In truth, however, the credit for the downfall of Jean-Claude Duvalier belongs to other elements in the church: Radio Soleil, *Caritas, Ti Legliz*, the Conference of Religious, and Mission Alpha. It is these groups that heeded the 1980 warning of the Haitian Conference of Religious:

> Woe betide you and us if we do not preach the Gospel. Keeping silent today is betraying God, the people, the church, and our mission. The time has come to make a choice which will be a turning-point for the Haitian church. The choice is clear: it is the preferential option for the poor. It is an evangelical option which in its radicalism, required our conversion and which will make us lose the support of the powerful. To speak about prudence can be a way to say no to the Spirit. Neutrality is taking a stand. There is a kind of prudence which is a betrayal of Christ. It is getting late. God looks at us, the people have their eyes on us. We have to decide.

It is apparent that the church, from the late seventies until roughly mid-1987, was the principal institution in Haiti giving impetus to peasant organization and development, literacy training, human rights, and support for the 1987 Constitution. From 1983 to 1987, the bishops spoke out forthrightly. In 1983, their pastoral letter, *The Haitian Church's Charter for Human Promotion*, launched the ambitious plan "to open the eyes of Haiti's poor" and to teach them how to read and write. They also supported a Haitian version of basic Christian communities, the *Ti Legliz*, and a variety of peasant movements. Diocesan *Caritas* offices and a number of church-sponsored training centers honed their own version of Paulo Freire's liberating pedagogy.

Institutional self-interest, the period of *dechoukaj*, and the events of 1987, however, appeared to burst the institutional seams. The events Wilentz describes numbed the bishops. Their responses were few and diluted with ambiguity. Even Bishop Romelus, the courageous preacher of the Rache Manyok movement, remained silent. When conflicts within the church erupted, especially Aristide's confrontation with his superiors and the bishops, and dialogue was needed, condemnations were issued. In August 1987, a pastoral letter on the "popular church" used an old Duvalier tactic for dealing with opponents: leaving the impression that the progressive elements of the church had been infiltrated by Communists.

Rural community efforts were slowed down. Local church activists felt they could no longer count on the church for their umbrella of cover. Peasant leaders in the central plateau, priest activists in the Artibonite, as well as Mission Alpha and Justice and Peace lay workers were threatened and arrested by military and Macoute forces; in April 1988, they halted Mission Alpha. While I write this, the most important program for Haiti's poor, Radio Soleil, is under fire. The Soleil team, which let the Haitian people know what was happening to them, seems to be the next target of the Episcopal Conference. As one news magazine put it, "*Le soleil ne brille plus a Radio Soleil.*" Fundamentally different visions of church coexist: one, decentralized, open to lay leadership, and provoking the upsurge of the Spirit from the lived reality of the people; the other, a top-down approach with initiatives coming almost exclusively from the hierarchy. Haiti is another example of the pressures pushing local churches toward a conservative, uniform model of ecclesiastical organization.

The Haitian bishops still claim "to walk with the people." Bishop La Roche's recent defense of Chavannes Jean-Baptiste and the Papaye Peasant Movement in the face of government threats is an eloquent example of this. Nonetheless, in spite of the bishops' pleas for unity in the church, their credibility is at a low ebb among active Christian and Catholic peasant groups. In cruder circles they are dismissed as Macoute bishops.

The scenario, however, does not lend itself to a good guy/bad guy picture. Wilentz unfortunately seems to slip into this trap. Too superficial a view leaves out the fact that the Haitian bishops, as well as the nuncio, supported the *Ti Legliz*, and supported Mission Alpha. That they have reneged on that support, of course, is all

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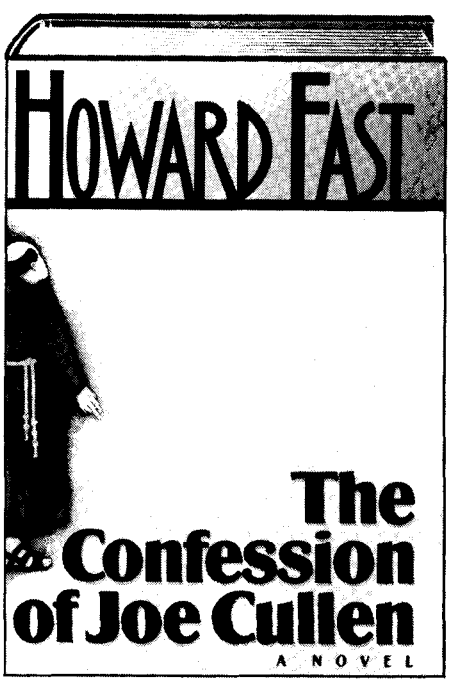

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the more tragic.

The fast pace of violent events, fear of Communist infiltration in the church, as well as pressure from Rome and the Haitian military have all taken their toll. The church in its own *Charter* paved the way for a new Haiti, but its own institutional interests proved too strong to deal with a splintered ecclesiastical policy, internal conflict, and a divided and shifting military and oligarchic political system in the aftermath of Baby Doc.

Between 1985 and 1987, an almost complete about-face can be noted on the part of the Haitian Episcopal Conference. By August 1987, after the Jean Rabel massacre, their message had shifted from "liberty and dialogue" to authority and orthodoxy: "A 'popular church' opposed to the church presided over by its legitimate pastors is, from the perspective of Jesus and the Apostles.... and the tradition of the church, a deviation...from the plan of salvation of Jesus Christ."

Many Haitian Catholics, at all levels of the church, thought they were involved in, if not leading, a much needed revolution. They suddenly found themselves rerouted to a "restoration." In light of all this, Wilentz too readily accepts a vague conspiracy theory which neatly packages the enemy under the "American plan" and links the Vatican and the hierarchy to the *ancien regime*. While such theories, I admit, become very attractive given the bizarre sociopolitical culture of Haiti, they leave out too much of the picture.

We are indebted to Wilentz. She has given us a dazzling, multi-faceted portrait of Haiti. But, like a Haitian primitive painting, *The Rainy Season* contains both wisdom and naiveté. In spite of the fear and misery, Haitians still hope for the rain. Thus the title. I can't say why, but I too share that hope. I saw Jean Bertrande Aristide a few weeks ago and he appeared hopeful and more relaxed than he had for months. I spoke to Radio Soleil staff members and they too still had hope that the bishops would back off. Haiti, like Caribbean rains, is unpredictable; coups usually occur when least expected. But maybe there is still a chance that the bishops will realize that the church's moment in the sun was a glorious one—like that of the church during the first century. □

BOOKS

A maze with no exit?

FROM BEIRUT TO JERUSALEM
Thomas L. Friedman
Farrar, Strauss & Giroux, $22.95, 525 pp.

Murray Polner

In the summer of 1982, while Beirut bureau chief for the *New York Times*, Thomas Friedman's father-in-law was told by an associate, "Your son-in-law is the most hated man in New York City today." His crime? As Friedman explains it, "I had helped inform the Jews of New York City of the less-than-heroic behavior of the Israeli army in Lebanon, the Sabra and Shatilla massacre, and other unsettling stories." But for those obsessed with rationalizing Israel's first nondefensive war—characterized by Ze'ev Schiff (military correspondent of the Israeli daily, *Ha'aretz*) and Ehud Ya'ari (Israel Television Middle East correspondent) in *Israel's Lebanon War* (1984), as "anchored in delusion, propelled by deceit, and bound to end in calamity"—the real culprit was "media bias."

The comment on Friedman is not only a telling reflection of the zealotry and inflexible spirit that has seized Israel's hardline defenders in the U.S. (though not the majority of American Jews) but also an ironic twist in view of the fact that Friedman was the first Jew the *Times* ever sent to report regularly from Jerusalem. But the canard about Friedman can be applied just as easily to Israel's enemies, those Arab-Americans and their backers who also see daily examples of "media bias" against their side. These uncompromising attitudes here and in the Middle East go a long way to explain Friedman's sense of anger, disillusionment, and feelings of hopelessness.

Reading Friedman's opinionated, passionate, and persuasive account of his decade in the Middle East, one is struck by his pessimism, yes, but also by the ignorance each side appears to have about the other. Neither the Israelis nor the Americans ever understood the tangled sectarian blood feuds in Lebanon. Indeed, Friedman points out that the Israelis had virtually no specialists on Lebanon before the invasion, believing that so fractured a country could never be a significant factor in the Middle East. (The Israelis were also incredibly myopic about the Palestinians they rule on the West Bank and in the Gaza Strip; as Friedman dryly notes, no Israeli specialist or intelligence official predicted—publicly or privately—the coming of the *intifada* or uprising.) Thus, in 1982, it was easy for the highly emotional prime minister, Menachem Begin, to become "so clouded by his own mythology" that he could ignore the fact that the "Christians" he wanted to rescue were a "corrupt, wealthy, venal collection of mafia-like dons. They were Christians like the Godfather was Christian."

Nor does the United States come off much better in Friedman's judgment, what with the disasters brought on by inept Reagan administration officials and the host of consultants and hustlers they tended to attract. Uninformed, uncertain, oppor-

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tunistic, and ideological, the vacuum they fashioned by their lack of firsthand knowledge of Lebanese history led directly to the senseless death of hundreds of U.S. Marines, the alienation of the Shiite Moslems, and the arms-for-hostages deal with Iran.

Even so, it's one thing to report and another to understand. Friedman's key to comprehension is grounded in his graphic description of his visit to Hama, Syria, after President Hafez al-Assad's troops slaughtered thousands of Sunni Moslems. Assad, described by Friedman as an unprincipled thug, governs by "Hama Rules," by which he means that anything goes in order to retain power. "Rule or die," is his definition. "One man triumphs, the others weep." This, Friedman argues, is the way things are in the region.

For those seeking easy solutions consider Israel's dilemma. Terrorist attacks and Arab belligerence have been its lot since the founding of the state, and continue today. At the same time Israel confronts 1.5 million Palestinians in the occupied territories who do not want to be governed by Israel, a fast-growing ultranationalist Jewish secular and religious right, and tens of thousands of settlers, many of whom may choose to fight their fellow citizens in the Israeli army rather than surrender their homes to Palestinians in any future agreement.

Consider, too, the Palestine Liberation Organization: still ambiguous about their willingness to come to terms with Israel despite recent declarations to the contrary and still practicing *la'am*, which Friedman defines as "a combination of Arabic words for yes and no...a perfect definition of PLO policy." Who, then, can trust whom, and under what circumstances, and with what assurances? And his blistering profile of Yasir Arafat and other leaders—Arab and Israeli—can hardly comfort anyone wishing to encourage the "peace process" let alone a *modus vivendi* between Israeli Jews and the West Bank Palestinians.

Given the mutual damage each side has inflicted on the other, their dehumanization of one another, and the subsequent emergence of fanaticism, Friedman's pessimism is certainly understandable. Nowhere is he more critical and despairing than in his withering description of self-styled American Jewish "leaders" and by his remark that "most intelligent young American Jews" have chosen to remain silent, especially after Lebanon and the Palestinian revolt. The logical follow-up question, "Could this silence be a prelude to indifference toward Israel?" is not posed but its implications are sobering.

What, then, are we to make of the author's gloomy assessment? To be sure, he offers vague proposals for change. A handful are worth considering, while others are not. Readers may judge for themselves. But it is in his final paragraph that he allows himself a glimpse of what could be. Casting aside the many blackguards he encountered he reminds us of the good men and women *on all sides* who desperately seek alternatives to the status quo. They look with hope to the United States. "America doesn't have all the answers [but] it can keep asking the right questions. It can keep hope alive; it can keep the discussion alive."

If Friedman is correct, and if the United States ever enters the region as a serious mediator, let us pray that it is up to so monumental and potentially dangerous a task. □

ARMED WITH A BLUNT OBJECT

WEBSTER'S DICTIONARY OF ENGLISH USAGE
Merriam-Webster, $18.95, 978 pp.

Niel Glixon

Merriam-Webster publishing a usage guide is rather like the Humanist Association publishing a catechism. It has the information but balks at offering guidance.

The cover blurb then is misleading when it describes *Webster's Dictionary of English Usage* (*MWU*) as "the definitive guide." If you seek its help in deciding between "different from" and "different than," you find a puzzling statement that both forms "have been in standard use since the 16th and 17th centuries." But in fact careful twentieth-century users consistently prefer "different from." *MWU* offers precious little guidance, and what it does offer is questionable.

Avoiding clear recommendations accords with the editors' philosophy. This they are not so foolish as to expound straightforwardly; it would hardly help to promote a "definitive guide." But you may infer it from their approval of a statement by Bergen Evans, co-author of another usage guide. Evans writes of "the incredibly arrogant assumption that we who have to do with observing and using speech in some way control it. We don't. The masses control speech. And all we do, ultimately, is follow on."

So, if you want a usage guide that humbly "follows on," *MWU* is your book of choice.

If, on the other hand, you want a book that truly guides you to usages that careful writers prefer, you are stuck with *MWU*'s aging predecessors: Fowler, of course, and Evans, Follett, and Bernstein. All of these writers, while recognizing the power of "the masses" in determining usage, do not surrender to the juggernaut. They believe they can make a difference.

Not only are they right; Merriam's editors concede the point implicitly. They complain, for example, of the schoolmarms of the last century who persuaded generations of writers that they must never split an infinitive nor use "between" with more than two objects. *MWU*'s complaints are perfectly valid—and they prove that someone besides the masses can influence usage.

Nearly thirty years have passed since the "Great Debate" over the third edition of Merriam-Webster's unabridged dictionary, compiled along similar principles: no judgments, just the facts, ma'am. Its crit-

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ics had one major complaint, that the dictionary failed "to give the information that would enable the reader to decide which usage he wants to adopt," as Dwight Macdonald put it.

By contrast, *MWU* constantly gives us this information—but nearly always for the crassest reasons. For each usage that the purist would scorn, *MWU* issues a supercilious warning: "its unfamiliarity will cause eyebrows to be raised"; "be prepared to catch a little flak"; "tends to mark the speaker and writer as socially and educationally inferior"; "not a prestige form; you are not likely to impress the boss, the teacher, or the job interviewer."

But the fundamental objection to *Merriam-Webster's Third Unabridged Dictionary* had not been that it would make the user a social pariah but that its canonization of dubious usages would lead to slovenly prose, as opposed to supple, efficient, logical, sensible, even beautiful prose. This is not a criterion that ever makes its appearance in *MWU*.

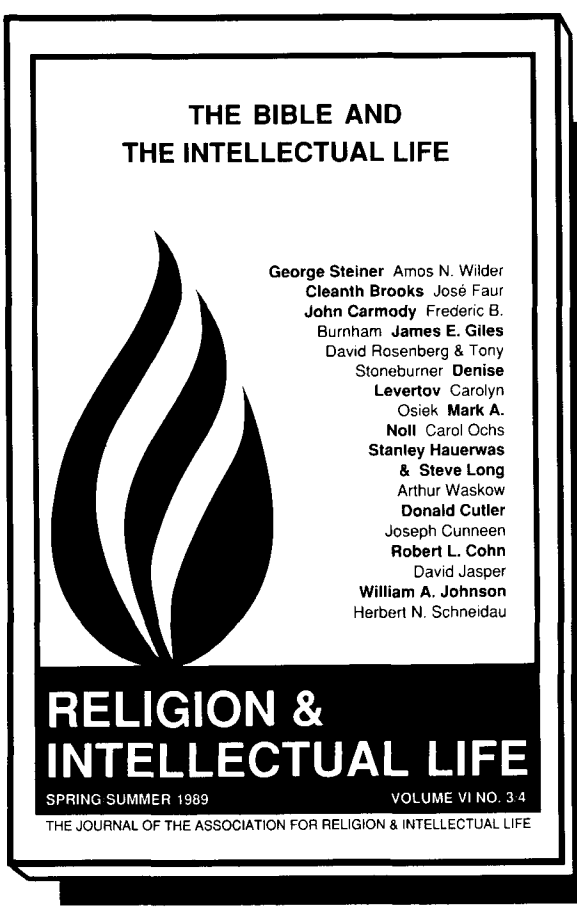
What then is *MWU*'s criterion for approval? Adequacy.

After discussing dangling modifiers—one of the worst vices of the careless writer—*MWU* decides they are really OK. "The usual reason given for avoiding such constructions is clarity, but in most cases the meaning can readily be discovered." But serious writers do not want the reader to have to "discover" their meaning. On the contrary, they want to make it plain from the start. In the end, *MWU*'s editors do not attach any importance to such careful writing.

This indifference is the rock on which the entire enterprise founders. True, *MWU* will be important to the usage scholar. Drawing on Merriam's vast files, *MWU* adduces dozens of citations to support any contested usage, and it addresses the arguments of commentators. From now on, no serious usage critic will be able to tackle a topic without consulting this volume. Whatever *MWU*'s shortcomings, no criticism can gainsay this thousand-page achievement.

But all of this is undermined by the dogma Merriam shares with so many linguists: that the trends of usage are inexorable, and no self-appointed guide can deflect them. In recent years, a few of these "descriptivists" have ventured to defy the party line, although with comical wariness: "To apply our studies to popular concerns may even involve us in making [gasp!] judgments of value—indeed, it will almost certainly do so. Such judgments are distasteful to many of our fraternity, but judgments of value are sometimes inevitable...." The wary scholar here is John Algeo of the University of Georgia.

MWU's editors, instead of sidestepping value judgments, might have made them confidently, armed with Merriam's incomparable data base. They might have instructed their readers in actually improving the language. Samuel Johnson, in the preface to his dictionary, worried that "tongues...have a natural tendency to degenerate....[Let] us make," he urged, "some struggle for our language." Not *MWU*. Though possessed of a great weapon, it sits out half the battles. For the rest, it offers aid and comfort to the enemy. □



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REVIEWERS

MURRAY POLNER *is editor of* Present Tense Magazine *and* Shalom: The Jewish Peace Letter.

NIEL GLIXON *recently wrote a comprehensive stylebook for the Scholastic magazines, one of which he edited for several years. He teaches writing at Pima Community College in Tucson, Arizona.*

IN BRIEF

AMERICAN CATHOLIC BIBLICAL SCHOLARSHIP: A HISTORY FROM THE EARLY REPUBLIC TO VATICAN II, *by Gerald P. Fogarty, S. J., Harper & Row, $34.95, 424 pp.*

This volume tells the story of Catholic biblical scholarship in the U.S.—brief—and in the twentieth century, controversial and filled with encounters between biblical scholars and their enemies (who included some members of the hierarchy). In some of these encounters I played a small part, so perhaps I am not the one to review this book. I do find Fogarty objective, but his sympathies are obviously with the scholars; hence I find it difficult to mount any adverse criticism. For that the reader must go to other sources, which I am sure can be found—although the defenders of orthodoxy rarely feel obliged to justify themselves.

If I were still teaching, I would recommend this book to my students as a model of historical research: thorough, objective, critical, uses all the right documents and interviews all the right people. I found things I did not know about episodes in which I was personally involved. All this is set forth with clarity and fairness to those concerned. Here, of course, is the rub: the spiritual heirs of Vagnozzi and Fenton will claim they have been wronged. If they feel this, this book is a challenge to them to put up or shut up. But they will do neither, preferring the knife in the back to honest confrontation.

The story of Catholic biblical scholarship in this century is neither beautiful nor edifying; it is ugly and basically un-Christian. It shows all the worst features of the magisterium: bullying, thought control, vindictiveness, envy of power—all the features of the medieval Inquisition without the physical violence. And it furnishes evidence for the conclusion that violence is no longer used, but only because it is against the law. The story reminds us that Jesus founded a church, not a school or a magisterium, and that he organized a college of apostles, not of rabbis, and that he proclaimed love, not *torah*. There are some basic concepts of the church involved here.

Recently I received a copy of Charles Curran's *Faithful Dissent*. This tells of the character assassination of a man against whom no charge has been proved. There one can see that the story which Fogarty tells so well is not dead history but live news, and that the Catholic church is never less the church of Jesus Christ than when it exercises its prized magisterium, its security blanket. JOHN L. MCKENZIE

Rev. John L. McKenzie is a renowned Scripture scholar, now retired and living in Claremont, Calif.

THE BEATITUDES IN MODERN LIFE. *Edited by Margaret Garvey. Thomas More, $8.95, paper, 183 pp.*

As a genre, devotional literature is beset with problems. It is difficult (thank God) for writers to establish spiritual authority, to convince a reader that they know what they are writing about. Devotional books can slip easily into the abstract, other-worldly, sentimental, judgmental, or overly prescriptive; they can float on slogans and quotations, false piety, false prophets, and unargued assumptions.

Although this slim volume suffers from several of these problems, five of the essays make it a book worth buying, reading, and thinking about. Readers may not always agree with the positions espoused or the personal examples described here, for many are extreme. Take Juli Loesch [Wiley's] model for "the persecuted": anti-abortion protester Joan Andrews, whose *absolute* refusal to cooperate with the criminal justice system landed her a five-year jail term, mostly in solitary confinement. One may question whether such a witness is commendable, yet it is difficult to imagine Andrews as a dangerous criminal or her sentence as just. Rachelle Linner tells the inspiring story of the Japanese survivors of the atomic bomb, but leaves the reader wondering whether "hungering and thirsting for justice" is to be equated with their particular political/moral position: absolutely no nuclear weapons. Thomas Cornell's efforts to end the Vietnam War *were* remarkable and far reaching, but draft card burning and Cornell's brand of pacifism will not be every reader's idea of peacemaking.

Even so, these stories are specific, powerful applications of the Beatitudes that undergird the book's basic contention that the retarded, the poor, the hungry, the sick, the persecuted, and the imperiled have something vital to teach all Christians.

Most moving and convincing are the essays on the sorrowful and the merciful. Sheila Cassidy, through her experiences of physical torture and the pain of deep doubt, struggles here to express what "blessedness" might mean. Patrick Jordan, with sensitivity and wisdom, unfolds story after story of mercies offered to and by the dying. His essay, which merits rereading, demonstrates how suffering can be redemptive. K.S.S.

CORRESPONDENCE

(Continued from page 482)

They have also scorned the idea of amending the PLO Charter to remove calls for Israel's destruction.

In order for the piecemeal approach to peacemaking to be constructive, these are some of the "land mines" which will have to be addressed.

IRA SILVERMAN
The American Jewish Committee

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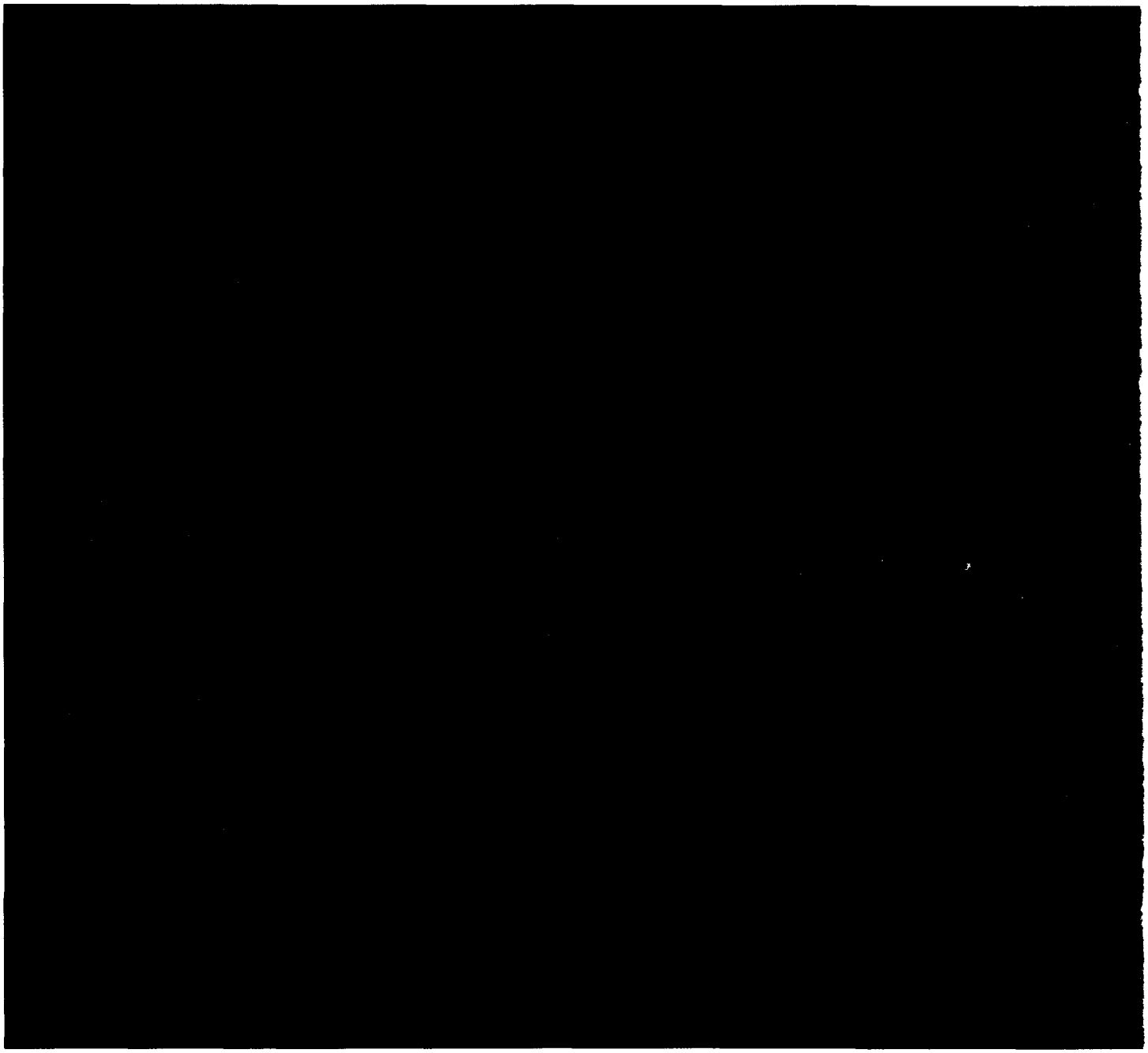

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